

M. K. I.

A U B R E Y .

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM,"

&c. &c.

"Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted within them, and they found no City to dwell in."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1854.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY REYNELL AND WEIGHT,
LITTLE PULTENEY STREET.

823

M355 a u

v. 3

A U B R E Y.

CHAPTER I.

. . Such a lord is love,
And beauty such a mistress of the world.

TENNYSON.

THE progress of a passion, however deep, when unbroken by incidents and uninterrupted by difficulties, may be compared to a quiet, deep stream, making its way under overhanging boughs, beautiful yet monotonous to watch.

We can stand looking for ever upon a tumultuous water rapid, struggling and tearing over rocks and stones.

The course of this love-tale proceeded in

the calm, unruffled manner of the first mentioned waters; and, therefore, I think we will dispense with the detailing of that gradual progress which William Aubrey slowly but certainly made in the affections of the young lady.

They walked together—first it was merely little strolls on the lawn, or by the edge of the lake in front of the dining-room windows, where they might be frequently observed—he talking and she listening. The time was not yet come for her to prattle, and for him to listen. That is the advanced period in a love history. Soon they might be seen sallying forth with all the young ones—a joyous company—and he, who rather disliked children, busily leading the ass with panniers, in which the two youngest were seated, and moving slowly and carefully through the autumn woods, stopping to gather nuts or blackberries, with which little hands and faces would be soon, as he not long ago would have thought, disgustingly besmeared. The elder ones, meantime, and their sister, surrounding them in a group, laughed and talked, and scrambled about, and tore dresses

—and Felicia and Millicent were very much tempted—wild young Irish girls as they were—to be rather rude, and to play tricks, and to pull his sleeves or skirts, or run away with his hat, or throw nuts in his face. I don't know how this grave young gentleman—of whom these joyous Irish children had long ceased to feel afraid—would have fared among the rabble rout, had it not been for the discreet elder sister. She did what she could to keep them in some order; but was unable to effect much.

He took it all in good part—rather seemed to enjoy it than otherwise. It is the same story over and over again repeated.

Proud man, a mere slave—a poor, weak captive, as humble and obedient as a drudge—perfectly unaware of the part he is playing—living in a sort of fool's paradise—a dream, from which he is certain, sooner or later, to awaken, and possibly to prove just exactly the same tyrant man that he was before,—

That is to say, if his passion prove fortunate. Men are rarely permanently influenced in that case. An unhappy passion may last a man his life; but, in general, it may be

said of this love-spring—that nothing in nature has so fine a show to end in so lame and impotent a conclusion.

But to return—

Jacob served his seven years, and they seemed to him but as so many days, for the love he bore his dark-eyed Rachel :—

And week after week did this man of intellect—a man to whom life, without exchange and excitement of thought had formerly been insupportable, while away his time in this remote wilderness, with no better company than a very ignorant Catholic priest, and a very stupid English clergyman, playing with a set of not very nice children, and going out walking with them as perseveringly as any nurse—and all for the love of one young creature—whose character was yet to form—whose mind was all untaught—whose heart was not even his own—but who certainly was as lovely as the divine daughter of the sea foam herself.

But one day, I forget how it befel, these troublesome children, whom he had of late

began to think sadly in the way, happened to be out of the way; and he found himself, how it came to pass I do not just at this moment recollect, wandering in a lonely neglected path, almost grown over by rampant fern and brambles, and overshadowed by such thick oak-boughs over-head, as to be almost impervious to the rays of the sun—walking alone with Lady Emma. They had proceeded together in silence for some time. She was thoughtful, and seemed sad—he walked by her side without speaking—every now and then casting sidelong glances at that sweet pensive face, as she walked musingly on—scarcely, as it would seem, aware of his presence.

His heart was trembling with agitation—it was the decisive moment—he would speak to risk his fate and win or lose it all—for he could bear this suspense no longer. And yet how he dreaded the moment—he had been so happy in this seclusion, enjoying her presence undisturbed by rivalry or jealousy, and receiving many simple marks of friendship and confidence which made his heart burn with fire. But now, might he hope for

more?—Was a deeper and tenderer feeling gradually taking its rise under this assured cordiality and kindness?

This was a question he could not answer.

Sometimes little circumstances, almost too slight, as he thought, to take account of, persuaded him that he was making way—but in general her manner was so open and easy, that it drove him nearly to despair. Her very smiles, her cheerful conversation, her apparent trust, and reliance upon him—things that would have flattered any other man—were to him but sources of pain.

But time was stealing away—he felt that this state of things was no longer to be endured. It was due to her—to her parents, to himself, to know exactly how he stood—and to persist in or withdraw his suit accordingly.—So he walked on by her side, hoping that she would speak—that she would say something, or that something might occur, to afford an opening.

But no—She walked on in a sort of listless, musing manner, absorbed in her own thoughts, and uttering not one word.

The path grew narrower. They could no

longer walk side by side. She must go first, and he must follow.

It was a trifle—but as in many other cases of the same description so trifling an obstruction soon put an end to the chance of his declaring himself at that moment—and ah! when *that* moment passes away, and the fatal word remains yet unsaid, who shall calculate the chances that something may not occur to prevent it ever being said at all?

He had found it difficult to speak when he was walking by her side, it was a thousand times more difficult—it was become impossible—now.

So they proceeded, and the path led on and on, twisting about between these tall trees, and among the thick underwood of hollies and mountain ash trees, till it suddenly terminated in the edge of a precipice—one which had been formed by an old quarry, whence stone for building the castle had ages ago been taken—it was now grown over by young trees, and broom, and tall grasses, which started from the fissures of the rocks. Beneath their feet yawned the deep dark basin of broken rocks, adorned

with tangled honeysuckles, and with the twisting ivy creeping round and over the faces of broken stone. A flight of steps was carried down one side of the precipice; but they were worn and broken, and the railing which had once formed a defence against the danger of falling over the rock was half-destroyed by time; and ruinous in many places.

She was preparing to go down these steps, regardless of the danger.—

“It is not safe—let me go first and help you.”

He had spoken—that invincible difficulty after a long silence.

She looked up in his face.

“Thank you—I am not in the least afraid.”

“That does not render danger less dangerous,” he said, with a soft, feeling, smile, “do not refuse to let me help you.”

And gently putting her aside, he passed her, went down a few steps, and then stopping, held out his hand.

She could not refuse to take it.

It trembled as she did so, yet its grasp was very firm.

Firmer and firmer, stronger and stronger

the pressure became, as carefully he guided her, holding back her light muslin dress from time to time to prevent it from being entangled in the briars.

And so they reached the bottom of this steep flight of steps in safety, and Emma would have withdrawn her hand, but he would not let it go.

“Not so,” he said, “Emma,—I have something to say to you.”

She did not start, but she coloured as she lifted up her face—looked full into his eyes—and then dropped hers as suddenly again.

He held her hand fast and led her to a little, rough seat of turf, where he placed her, and himself, and laying hold of her arm, said;—

“Emma, I have longed for this moment more than life—and dreaded it more than death;—one word—one look only!—Can you, —will you love me?”

She did not look up—she shook her head.

“Nay,” he said, “let me have done with suspense—I can bear it no longer—Emma,

you know—you must—you ought to know—the power you possess. It is vain to resist it—it is my fate;—I, who never thought to be subdued by woman—who believed, and who intended that I should pass through life—my freedom of thought and action, unimpaired, by what I had taught myself to look upon, as an ignoble slavery. Emma, no creature that ever paced this earth was more engrossingly, more abjectly, the victim of such feelings than I am! I love you, Emma, as never creature loved before. For your sake there is nothing upon earth that I cannot do or dare;—be mine, and make what you will of me;—reject me—but I will not—I dare not think of it;—Emma, have pity upon the wretch that you have made.”

“I made!” she repeated, turning upon him her grave, half-offended eyes;—“I made!—What have I done?”

“Ah! my sweet one;—it was no fault of yours. Did I reproach you?—alas, my dearest, you have done nothing—you have not cared for me enough—even to try to please me—it is all my own mad infatuation—I know it—I

own it. Nor do I complain—I only entreat your pity,—Emma, have pity upon me.—I do not even ask you to love me—I only ask you to be mine, to let me love you—to let me save you and yours.”

“Save!”

“Forgive me,—but why should we disguise the truth? This is the moment,” he went on, and his voice became more assured, and his attitude more manly and determined.—“This is the moment, if ever there be a moment in life, for perfect unreserve and candour. Let there be no disguises between you and me—I love you so—that—but that idea is, I know, a vain one Oh, Emma to have been loved by you but that can never, never be—I know it all too well;—but, Emma, I love you so, that I will be content upon any terms, so you will but allow me to pass my life by your side. Only give me a title to shelter you—to house you from that storm which is too surely approaching, and will soon burst upon you and yours.”

“Too surely!—too surely!”—she repeated

sadly—"I have seen it long—I knew it must come, sooner or later it *must* come."

"And what is to become of you all?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"Nay, my love—nay, Emma—let me call you so?"

There was a something in her face and voice not altogether discouraging.

"Nay, my love—my Emma,"—and clasping her suddenly in his arms, he cried—"I see it—I see it—you will—you will;—oh, heaven! make me—make me thankful."

He pressed her tightly to his bosom—her face fell upon his shoulder.

She felt so safe in those protecting arms.

Yes, after all the anxiety and terror for the future, which had of late pressed more heavily than ever upon her,—it was such a relief to feel sheltered.

And yet at that very moment her heart smote her—she did not love him as she ought.

She disengaged herself—and drawing back a little, said, softly—

"But I am afraid I should not do right."

“And who upon heaven should you wrong?” he cried.

“You.”

“Oh, thank you, my sweet one. I’ll bear the wrong gladly—gladly. Only be mine—and you are mine”—and he fondly threw his arm round her—“I am content—content. There are no words made to express how content; for are you not the soul of my soul, and the life of my life—the light of my darkness—the crown of my being—my own, own, own, adored Emma?”

He spoke so violently—so passionately, that she trembled.

“Oh! but I am unworthy of so much love—indeed I am.”

“Are you?” and he smiled once more, so charmingly, as she thought. “I’ll be the judge of that.”

“But how can I? I feel ashamed—I scorn my own inconst”

He carried the hand he held in his to her lips, and so stopped her mouth.

“Inconstancy!—ashamed of your own inconstancy! ’Tis that what you would say, my love. Alas! there is no rival here”—and

his brow suddenly darkened. "No one is left on earth to share that treasure, your heart, with me. There is no inconstancy in this. I do not ask you to forget *him*—I know you never will forget *him*. I ask no more but for a widowed heart. Small as my portion in it may be, it is enough. I shall ever respect your feelings, Emma, and only idolize you the more."

"You loved your brother very much?"

"I loved him as one brother ought to love another; but he is gone. Do not let us speak of him," and his pale face looked livid rather than pale. "Emma, I promise you I will not be jealous of that love you bear his memory. It is sacred—I shall never attempt to interfere with it; but do not let us speak much of him—Edward. It is too painful—let us speak of your sisters and mother."

She looked into his face, and was shocked at the expression she saw there.

His words had been comparatively unimpassioned; but a strange trouble was in his eye—an expression it was quite impossible for her to understand. Alas! how should she?

He seemed dreadfully agitated.

He had attained the goal of his desires—why did he look in this manner? His grief for his brother merely must be very great; but even that would scarcely account for it. She was young and inexperienced, but she knew that men, at least, are rarely affected to such a degree—especially when some time has elapsed since their loss.

He caught the expression of her questioning face, and he recovered himself at once.

He shook off the feelings, whatever they were, by a violent effort, and then he said,

“My sweetest angel, I have much to say to you; but first let me thank you—as I do from the very depths of my heart—that you have had the generosity to give yourself to me before you have heard what I am going to say.”

“I think,” she replied, looking down, “that you love me. I wish I had a heart at liberty to give in return for an affection which I *do* value, William Aubrey. I was always proud of your partiality; but do not ask me—and I am sure now you will not—to forget Edward—I never can do it, and I never shall. But you are his brother, and he used to speak so

affectionately of you—he called you the best friend he ever had—how your hand trembles! —I shall never care for any one left now in the world so much as I can for *his* brother. Now I think I have told you what I ought; and now,” she added, and she smiled so sweetly and affectionately upon him, that he could scarcely trust himself to look upon her —“And now, what more have you to tell me?”

“More to tell you—ah! my darling!—volumes remain untold; but those volumes shall not be opened just now. The subject which I wanted to speak to you more particularly about I can now enter upon frankly. My sweet Emma, forgive me that in the base abjectness of my passion, I had reserved these matters as arguments to enforce my suit, if, as I dreaded, something of this sort might be necessary to persuade you to the acceptance of my hand. Your generous candour has spared me this. How can I thank you enough for it. You do not know, my love—no woman can know—what a man is capable of,

possessed by a passion so wild, so uncalculating as mine."

"Why, what very terrible thing had you in store for me, Mr Aubrey?"

"Call me William—why don't you call me William?"

"Because you seem so much older and wiser, and more respectable in every way than I am—I should be ashamed—I should feel it impossible to treat you in that familiar way."

"You called my brother, Edward."

"Ah! that was quite another thing."

Again the countenance darkened—he had promised himself and her, that he would not be jealous of the dead—Vain promise!

"Yes—I understand," and he sighed.

There was silence.

He sat there leaning his face upon his hand, gazing at her—gazing, gazing—and still holding her hand, whilst she, in colour slightly heightened, her eyes bent upon the ground, and a soft, mournful expression upon her beautiful face, sat there, moving with her foot the fallen pine leaves which strewed the path before her.

She smothered a sigh.

He sighed yet more deeply than before.

“Fool !” at last he said,—“ So it must of course be ”—then seeming to make an effort with himself, he went on—his eyes still watching her intently.

“ Your generous acceptance of me, before I had entered upon the subject—ought to—has—made it comparatively easy—you have given yourself to me unbought, noble girl. Now let me tell you what I have been thinking of—your mother, and those children that you love so dearly. . . . ”

“ Ah !—yes !—well—what of them ? Tell me, what of them ? ” and, as if suddenly aroused from a trance, she looked up eagerly—“ I had forgotten them ! Dear Mr Aubrey, how selfish I seemed only to be thinking of you and myself—I had forgotten them—How hateful of me.”

Fresh admiration shone in his eyes—which softened to an expression of ineffable tenderness.

“ Had you, for a moment ?—Heaven bless that moment.”

“ Oh, how can you say so—what do you mean ? ”

“Never mind, but listen—I have not forgotten them—My thoughts are full of them. The fate hanging over your mother and all of you is something dreadful. *He* can escape it—Men can contrive to escape from the consequences of their own folly—excuse me, love—it is your father, I know—but are they not also your brothers and sisters, and your mother—these beings he has so cruelly injured?”

She fixed her eyes upon him, listening but not uttering a word.

“The sword so long suspended is about to fall,” he said, “and your father means to leave Ireland in a few days.”

“And take us with him? Oh dear! how will mama manage it?”

“No, not to take you all with him. That would embarrass his flight too much.”

“His flight.”

“Alas! poor child—that is the rude, but too significant word—yes, flight from his creditors—escape from those proceedings on the part of his creditors which I very much fear would end in worse than flight.”

“Does my mother know?”

“No—she suspects nothing of this. She

is aware of the great distress your father is in for money; and has often been obliged to adopt those means advised by an iniquitous steward, which are certain to end in ruin; he has long been battenning, as I suspect, upon your father's property—but your mother is still ignorant of the whole extent of the evil and of the rapid approach of the last catastrophe. Writs will be out against your father in a few days—I happen to know it with certainty.”

Steward—‘iniquitous steward’—It was upon those words that her attention was fixed. “Then it was not all—it did not all go in debts. . . .”

“No, my dear, not all, your father has been rash, and no doubt—forgive me for saying so,—very blameable, with a large family like his, to indulge his passion for the turf—but though this has materially injured him, the root of the evil lies in a villainous man of business, who has flattered his propensity to extravagance, by furnishing him with supplies obtained at a cost which has completed his ruin. Negligence, that curse of landed proprietors in this country, has done more

than even the dangerous love of expense, and of gaming."

"It is little better. Ah! Mr Aubrey, what will become of him—of them—and all of us?" but suddenly seeming to recollect herself, "how can you ask me to leave them now?—If they are ruined, I shall stay and share their ruin."

"Do you know that I am immensely rich?"

"No, I did not, I am sure, but what is that to this matter?"

"My father," he went on, "when he made the disposition of his property—which gave to one son his estates, and to another, a moderate sum of money—was not fully aware of what he was doing. He was active, energetic, and far-seeing, but even he could not foretell what has, within these last few weeks, come to light. There have been mines discovered upon one of his estates, of a value not to be calculated."

She looked indifferent, and his eyes sparkled with new pleasure. "You do not seem to care for this," he said softly.

"I—why should I? I was thinking of

my mother, and those poor little girls and boys," she said, and the tears stood in her eyes.

Oh! how fondly he looked at her now.

He seemed as if it was a pleasure to gaze upon this sorrow, upon this truthful, ingenuous face, clouded with grief for those she loved, quite unmoved by the prospect of wealth and splendour for herself, and he could not resist the delight of enjoying it for a little moment—but it was not long, before he went on—

"And will it not enter into that dear head," he said on, "that this being so, there is enough for all of us."

"I don't understand you."

"My Emma, there are very good and wise rules for the world's governance in ordinary circumstances, and I, for one, think that in general it is safest and best for the world to be governed by them, but there are exceptional cases and circumstances continually occurring, when a noble spirit breaks through such restraints, and is brave enough to despise old saws, when a good is to be done."

“I don’t know what you are meaning.”

“Listen then, patiently, and you soon shall, sweet Emma. Do you know what a man upon the other side of Europe does, when a father gives him his daughter?”

“Not I—how should I?”

“Why, he is very much obliged to him—and instead of taking something besides the daughter, as if he were to be bribed into the acceptance of her—he gives the father a very handsome matter in return as a proof how he values the gift. Now of the two plans—whatever philosophers and political economists may say—the second seems to my mind best calculated to prove the inestimable value which a man in some cases—such a one as mine, for instance—attaches to the boon—and therefore, my Emma will allow the custom of one country to prevail in this case over the customs of another country—and so, my sweetest, sweetest girl, I purpose to take some of this money—that has fallen in this unexpected manner into my lap, and to make your mother independent, and provide for your sisters, as if I were their elder brother—which indeed I almost am—and so furnish

the means for the education of them all, boys as well as girls—and oh! my love—say not a word—That you had given yourself to me unbought—unbiassed by this little bribe of mine! . . . Ah, Emma!—I am overpaid, indeed.”

“You must not do this—mama will never let you do this.”

“Yes, my darling—she is reasonable—she is wise—she is a good, sensible, affectionate woman and mother, and she will not maintain a romantic attachment to the way they manage things in this country—or refuse to allow them to be carried out as they are in other lands—”

“You are wondrous—wondrous—generous—but this can never be—”

“Ah, Emma! never be! and you pretend to esteem me.”

“But such an obligation—such a—”

“And is not my Emma’s heart delicate and generous enough—yes, I am quite sure it is—to perceive how far more noble it is in some cases to receive than to give—how far more blessed to give than to receive.”

“You have, indeed, a high-minded way of

putting things," she said with enthusiasm, and flashing such a look upon him from eyes beaming with approbation, that he could scarcely stand it.

"Well, then, that is settled—And now for your father. Perhaps you will ask me why the father himself, of whom I have been making a sort of scapegoat, is to have no share in this."

"I am sure I do not—I am sure I could not."

"We will take care of him, my love—that is, *you* shall take care of him—he would probably refuse to accept anything from me—He will take it from his daughter—Your personal allowance will be large enough to afford one, who will not desire to rival vain women in vain expenses expenses of vanity which are limitless as the sea—It will be large enough, to afford a good child all she can require for her father—Will this do—?"

"Ah, William ! William !"

Her heart was touched to the quick, by this last stroke—it consented to be happy.

"And dear, dear little girls, they will be

all taken care of!" And her countenance grew very bright.

Why should it not be so—he said he was so rich. Why should she not soften her heart to rejoice, to throw off all the vain shackles of pride, and honestly to delight in the prospect?—

"Ah, William! William!—how good you are!"

It was a sweet moment,—

To see her made so happy in the prospect he presented, and to feel assured that in her generous regard for her family she could never have found the heart to refuse it—and to know that she had accepted him before the plan was even hinted at, or the very embarrassments from which it sprang adequately known. This was a reward that his delicacy and generosity surely deserved.

And he ought to have felt transcendently happy at this blessed conviction, loving as he did, and jealous and delicate as was his heart—but his was not a face of happiness.

The countenance of William Aubrey rather represented that of one relieved from torture

than of one in the enjoyment of bliss. The vestiges of the torture still remained—and what is more touching than the shadow that still rests upon the face after the relief from a paroxysm of excessive pain?

He did not look happy, she thought—and she was touched by it, and she said, as, her arm resting upon his, they were slowly retracing their steps homewards,—

“You don’t look happy, Mr Aubrey. Have I said anything to give you pain? Perhaps I have—I have always found it the most difficult thing in my life to express myself, when I was greatly obliged to any one. You saved my life once—and I believe I thanked you very, very awkwardly—but this is a vast deal more than saving my life—and I would not seem ungrateful for the universe.”

He pressed her arm silently to his side—but he did not speak.

“Just tell me—don’t, pray, look so sadly—William. Something is the matter, I am sure—what is it?—*have* I done or said anything?”

“Do I look sadly?” he said again, with

a sudden effort, shaking off, as it were, a train of painful thoughts.—“Forgive me, my love ; I am sure I ought not to look sadly, at this the happiest moment of my existence—I might say the only happy moment I have ever known.—*You* say anything to give me pain, my angel?—you!—So simple, so honest, generous, and good.—I loved your beauty, Emma—but I adore your heart.”

“And now, my darling,” he went on—“I think I had better prepare you for this.—I have not had a very happy life, my love, and this, on a sickly childhood, seems to have laid the foundation of great soberness and occasional sadness of character.—I am not gay and brilliant—like. . . . I was ever a grave and thoughtful child, and the child is father of the man. Can you—you beautiful young cherub — can you bear with this?”

“I love a man to be grave, I think—it was the romance of my girlish days—that I should belong to a serious, clever, rather alarming man—and that I should be like his kitten and play about him, and tease

him, and make him laugh—and not be afraid of him as all the rest of the world were.”

He was seldom—seldom—happy—but that last speech, at least, made him acquainted with what the feeling of perfect happiness might be.

CHAPTER II.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ harmony
Swells up, and shakes, and falls.

TENNYSON.

“MY Emma—my dear, beautiful, beloved, charming child—even from the very first moment of your birth I have loved you as I never did or could love anything else in the universe. The first moment that I saw you . . . I have never forgotten it, and I never shall Never was new-born infant so beautiful! Generally, they are ugly little things; but you never were—from that hour to this—infant, baby, child, girl—you have been to my eyes the most lovely of human beings. I could conceive nothing more so—you were the pride, joy, and consolation of my heart. Like a blessing you came to my arms—like a blessing upon this house—sent,

I knew and felt, to be its honour and its salvation—dear, dear girl!”

Emma's head rested upon her mother's bosom—she was encircled by her arms. The Marchioness was little given to fond effusions of the above nature; but her joy was unbounded, and, as often happens with such characters, it found its vent in words, when hearts of more acute sensibility might, perhaps, have taken refuge in silence; nevertheless, most sincerely did she feel everything she said.

She had doted upon this beautiful girl, who was the pride and triumph of her heart, and had been the source of innumerable fond hopes and expectations—the consolation of many a harassed day—and now, to have all her anxieties for herself and her children brought to an end, and that just as the terrible, long-anticipated crisis was approaching, to be rescued, and everything arranged in this complete—this most satisfactory—manner, and through Emma's means, was something beyond even her most romantic expectations.

She felt not the slightest scruple in accepting William Aubrey's liberal proposals—in

truth, she honestly thought that in bestowing Emma upon him she more than repaid all he could do—and added to all the causes she had for satisfaction, there was the recent unexpected addition to a before splendid fortune, rendering the match, which a few months ago she must have regarded as a little falling short of her daughter's just claims, a most gratifying affair.

Enormous wealth is a dignity in any country. Aladdin was thought no *mésalliance* for the Sultan's daughter, and the riches that had been lately showered down upon William Aubrey, through the mineral treasures found upon his estate, appeared almost fabulous.

Possessor of the magic lamp of this century, his underground treasures seemed countless.

In a confidential conversation which had passed between him and the Marchioness, he had clearly shown that the very handsome allowance he proposed to settle upon herself; the advances he engaged to make—to provide for the education and advancement of her younger sons—and the portions he at once bestowed upon her daughters were but as a

few drops, out of this boundless ocean of wealth.

The joy, the relief, the triumph of the mother's heart was complete.

Her mistakes had been many; but these she owed more to the imperfect views resulting from a faulty education, than to any original defects in herself. She had an honest, if not a very delicate, way of feeling, and this sudden change in the prospects of her children afforded a substantial pleasure, which not even the fate of the misguided Marquis, or the necessary separation between them, could much disturb.

He was already gone—as William Aubrey had predicted.

The very evening of that day upon which he declared himself to Emma, the Marquis had started for France.

He just had time to kiss and bless his daughter, and tell her she was an excellent girl and was going to marry an excellent fellow, before he was off.

Every acre of the landed property was entailed.—The encumbrances upon it which neither himself nor those who went before

him had thought of diminishing, must be dealt with as best they might.

The result was, that the whole of the income must be abandoned to the creditors during the present possessor's life,—who looked upon the matter with his usual carelessness—consoling himself with the reflection, that his eldest son was not wronged of a penny, in consideration of which he must, in his turn, raise sufficient money upon post-obits to keep them all from starving.

This would be only continuing the system, which seemed hereditary in their house.

Thus he settled the matter with himself in his usual off-hand way, but the Marchioness knew better ; she felt sure, though her Lord seemed obstinately resolved not to believe it,—that her eldest son,—with an intellect weakened by the consequences of intemperance and dissipation, and a victim at times to that dire scourge of vice, delirium tremens, was in no condition to effect post-obits, even should he feel inclined thus to encumber himself, for the sake of a father to whom he professed to owe no obligation, and with whom he was actually upon ill terms.

She had thus looked round in vain for rescue from desperate ruin and impending starvation, and her last hope had rested upon Emma's conquest of Mr Aubrey.

Her most sanguine dreams had been exceeded, and she even forgot to enquire at first what was to become of the ruined husband and father—however, she presently settled that matter with herself—her income would enable her to make him an allowance, on which he might contrive to live in some cheap country. She should be able to economise, but she must look to her girls' interests.

She must not forget that she should have to introduce her girls.—

And thus she gave way, in a fond moment, to her joy, and repeatedly kissed the soft, shining hair—upon her daughter's young and beautiful head.

And there was great peace at Emma's heart.

She could now dwell upon Edward's memory with tenderness and regret—but without a feeling of remorse for her inconstancy. She felt the assurance of her conscience, that she had done well. She liked William Aubrey

very much, and perhaps, she was not sorry that it was so right to accept him.—At all events, the conviction softened that self-reproach which naturally arose in her heart upon this occasion.—She had made everybody so happy!

It was not unpleasant to find herself all at once become so important a personage;—and to have to plan, and think of many things so agreeable to a girl's fancy—remember, she is but a girl, she has not yet quite closed the year, she is still only nineteen.

There were dreams of beautiful dresses—and charming houses, and carriages and horses—and plenty of money—and helping her father, and above all, Algernon. . . . Yes, she should soon seek out Algernon—and she would give such a great deal to Algernon—and then her other brothers—she wondered what schools William Aubrey would choose for them to go to—and would Miss Fisher come to be governess to her sisters?

The very first thing she should do, after she was married, should be to write and try to persuade Miss Fisher to do so. . . .

Such were the various heterogeneous mat-

ters that coursed each other through that little head,—as there she lay nestling in her mother's arms.

At length the Marchioness having ended by shedding a few large honest tears, started up, —with—

“ Oh ! dear !—but we must be thinking of business ”

Of business, indeed, there was enough to do.

And first where were they all to go ?

But William Aubrey had arranged that, himself.

Now, though he loved to see his Emma so amiably engaged with her sisters,—as he would have loved any occupation in which she might choose to have been employed—yet, as I have said, he was no lover of children in themselves,—he thought them very troublesome, noisy, beings—uninteresting, and always in the way. So that he had not the slightest intention of making one family of it. Nay, he rather particularly determined to have his wife a good deal to himself,—and to separate her as much as he graciously could from relations, that he liked little enough.

His contempt for the Marquis himself was such as might be expected in a man of his character—and the Marchioness he detested almost more. He shrank disgusted from the coarseness of her sentiments, which no suavity of manner could disguise from him—and the affection and partiality, she was rather too liberal of towards himself, though springing from genuine gratitude for what he had done, —were irritating and displeasing to his taste.

Actuated by these feelings he secretly resolved to establish the Marchioness and her children in some place at a considerable distance from the home to which he was about to carry his Emma.

And the possibility of the Irish channel rolling between himself and his noble relations, offered to him an advantage not to be disregarded.

He therefore proposed, that he should hire Hurstmonceaux Castle—and that the Marchioness and her children should continue to reside there, with the understanding that it should be his and Lady Emma's home, whenever they wished to visit Ireland.

It was indispensable, he said, that he should live himself principally in England.

He intended to take immediate possession of his father's splendid mansion in D—shire. A slight idea of which, I have endeavoured to give in my opening sketch.

And so everything was arranged, and, in a short time from the departure of the Marquis—as short, in fact, as decency would permit—for mother-in-law and son-in-law, were equally disinclined to delay—the Lady Emma Mordaunt, of Hurstmonceaux Castle, eldest daughter to the Most Noble the Marquis of Hurstmonceaux was married to William Aubrey, Esq., of Chilham Hall, county of D——, only surviving son and heir of the late William Edward Aubrey, Esq., M.P., &c., &c.

The marriage was a private one, by special licence, and took place in the dining room of the castle—so little was done by way of celebration of it, that it passed off like an every-day affair.

Late in the evening the newly married pair started for England.

The little ones were all allowed to sit up

to take leave of Emma, and a pretty sight it was to see them clinging about her. Some all joy and delight at their own new dresses—the elder ones half smiles and half tears—the Marchioness more glad and more sorry than, perhaps, she had ever been in her life before—but gladness predominating.

It was actually done.—The deeds which secured a competency to herself and her girls were safely locked up in her desk.—The settlement made upon Emma was splendid, and the trousseau would not have done discredit to a princess.—The lover having in this case, it seems, also adopted another custom copied from foreign parts—and himself presented a *corbeille de mariage*, which contained everything that woman could desire.

It had been presented to the Marchioness, who was in the highest delight at this thoughtful care, for, truth to tell, she had been much troubled in her mind how this most necessary appendage to all marriages was to be got together.

But Emma had stood there, with thoughtful eye, as one article after another of splendour

or luxury was unfolded by her mother, till every piece of furniture in the room was loaded with them.

It was very kind—very thoughtful of William Aubrey—and she was glad to see her mother look so relieved and happy—yet she felt oppressed by this load of obligations.—She did not love him well enough not to feel this oppression.—She had not attained to that highest heaven of love—in which to receive and to give are as one.

She liked him very much, and was quite content to be his wife—but—the true fusion of hearts had not yet taken place—they were not one, but two.—She felt all the more obliged by his kindness and thought; but obligation is a weight to a delicate and lofty heart, after all said and done.

“Why, Emma, my dear child, how pensive you look! What can you be thinking of! Really, my dear one—there is not an article wanting. I wonder who did it for him, for he has not one female relation of his own.—A very good thing for you, by the bye—and yet some person of equal taste and judgment must have presided over this selection.—I

cannot think who it could have been. My dear child, don't get into that grave thoughtful way—only look at this cloak, is it not extremely pretty, and trimmed with genuine Brussels lace! My Emma, you will be dressed like a duchess.”

And all the time Emma was feeling that she should not have cared to have been wanting in everything, or how plain her trousseau had been, so that it had been paid for by her mother.

She pushed the cloak away, a little pettishly, and said, “I am sure I don't want to be so fine.”

“Why, you most ungrateful creature!—but, my dear, for goodness sake, shake off that dull, indifferent look—it would vex William Aubrey sadly, to see his very handsome, generous care for us all thus received.”

“But I wish he had not done any such thing. Ah, mama! I would rather ten thousand times have been married just as I am.”

“Impossible, child! how you talk!—And if I had had your trousseau to get and pay for, I declare I do not know what I should

have done.—It would have embarrassed me for years.—I am sure *I* feel excessively grateful for this kind consideration on his part, and you ought to feel so for my sake, if you do not for your own . . . instead of standing pouting your pretty lips there like an obstinate child but I cannot imagine whom he got to choose the thing so well.”

It was very ungracious, when she began to think of it, to feel in the way she did—and when he intended so kindly, too—and it had been such a relief to her mother !—she ought to be grateful—appear grateful at least she would try to do, whatever her private feelings might be.

When William Aubrey and she were next together, she said, “I have to thank you for a very kind act of consideration, as regards my poor dear mother.”

“What act ?—I don’t know what you mean, my love.”

This was quite true ; he had forgotten all about the matter. He was not a man to think twice about a *corbeille de mariage*.

This made it still more disagreeable to speak.

“ Why, about the corbeille — all those pretty things that are come. . . . ”

“ Corbeille!—what’s a corbeille? ”

“ Why the things—the clothes ”—she said a little impatiently, and colouring scarlet.

“ Oh! I beg your pardon, my love—I had quite forgotten all about it—But you don’t look pleased,”—he added, examining her countenance with anxiety—“ Is anything wrong—have the persons I entrusted with the commission failed in their duty—if so—will the Marchioness be so kind. . . .—Everything shall be exactly as she would wish it—if she will only please to give her orders.”

“ Oh,” said she, a little touched in spite of herself—“ Mama is quite delighted—and indeed ”—and she began to smile a little again—“ she is quite *intriguée* to make out whom you could have found capable of executing a commission so well—which she declares it is the one of all in the world the most difficult to do.”

“ I am glad she is satisfied. I entrusted the commission, dearest Emma,”—he went on—“ to a person with whom I must make you acquainted, and whom I hope you will like—

for I am very much attached to her—and, in future may I hope that we shall be one in our tastes and our distastes, as we shall be one in all other respects—Will it not be so, my own ?”

“ Oh yes !—I hope so. . .—to be sure. . .” she said, but it was not a response from the heart—“ but who is this wonderful person ?—Mama told me that she thought you had no sisters.”

“ She said true. I have no sisters. She might have added, that I never knew what it was to have a mother—I was discarded from my mother’s bosom a poor orphan, the day I was born . . . the woman I speak of took me up—the deserted one !—she has been mother, sister, friend—everything to me. She loves me, I believe, as few love even their own sons—but she is a remarkable person in every way—has an almost preternatural insight into things—great strength of character, and a heart such as there are few in the world—her love is bestowed upon few, I might say almost, upon only one—but where she loves it is with a strength and fidelity rare and most precious.”

“ She must be a very extraordinary woman—but what was she ?—your nurse ? ”

“ Just so.”

“ Our nurse here is a very good woman, too—but I could scarcely feel so much about her as you seem to do about yours—though she loves me very much, too—so I do not ask you, Mr Aubrey, to fall down and worship our dear, old woman—and you must not expect too much of me as regards yours—Is she like nurse—very ugly, old, and somewhat cross ? ”

“ She has one of the finest countenances I ever saw—she is not old, and looks younger than she is. She is extraordinary, in every way—and seems to belong to quite another rank in society from the one she occupies—her only fault is that she is somewhat hasty in her temper—but this my darling will overlook, for my sake, will she not ? ”

“ Yes—But it does not much matter—I suppose I shall not see much of her—I am not accustomed to be familiar with servants. A visit now and then to see her boy will be enough—I dare say you are still *her boy*—Nurse still looks upon me as a child, and would if I were an hundred.”

“ Pardon me, my dear love—I have established Alice at Chilham. There was a sort of understanding between us that she should make one of my household when I married—and I have placed her at the head of it—for, as I told you, she is a remarkably clever person, and has the best head for business that I have yet met with in any woman.”

Emma did not look exactly well pleased.

“ Indeed, my love,” he went on once more, again anxiously watching her face—“ You will like her—It is impossible not to like her—her manners are above her station—she has excellent abilities—and the warmest heart—at least a heart most generously attached to me.”

“ Generously !”

“ Yes, generously, Emma—she loved me when no one else cared for me—when father and mother alike neglected me, she was father and mother—everything to the poor discarded child—do, my dearest, try to love her for my sake—for the sake of all she has been to me.”

He spoke earnestly, almost imploringly—he seemed very anxious and uneasy.

She remembered how much she owed him—

and thought of this corbeille; this last proof of generosity. . . . and yet in her inner heart she could not help liking it still less for having been chosen by this woman—all the time abusing herself for being most perverse and ungrateful . . . and so she again tried to dissemble her feelings, and she said—

“ I dare say I shall like her very much when I see her.”

“ Do—pray do—for my sake.”

“ Oh, yes!—It *will* be for your sake.”

“ And a little for her own too, shall it not?—for she is very fascinating as well as marvellously handsome.”

“ Is she ? ”

As if one cared for all that—was Emma's secret reflection. I only hope to goodness I shall be able to help hating her.

CHAPTER III.

That hope, which was his inward bless and boast,
Which waned and died, yet ever near him stood,
Though changed in nature, wander where he would—
For Love's despair is but Hope's pining ghost!
For this one hope he makes his hourly moan,
He wishes, and can wish for this alone.

COLERIDGE.

THEY travelled by short journeys, lingering upon the road.

Emma had seen very little fine scenery—there had been few or no opportunities for her enjoying the charms of nature, to which she was most keenly sensible.

Of course, in a needy, embarrassed family like her's, travelling for travelling's sake was entirely out of the question. To travel, meant, with her parents, merely the getting over the necessary ground in as rapid and inexpensive a manner as circumstances would permit.

It was a very great pleasure to William Aubrey to indulge this taste of her's, and his enjoyment of their long, dawdling tour

through the most romantic districts of either island was as great as happiness to him could ever be.

Alas ! there was a worm gnawing at his heart, which impaired every joy ; though the sense of secret pain was for the moment allayed by the tranquil and innocent felicity arising from as pure and tender a love as ever man felt for woman.

A captive to her beauty, he was more than ever enslaved, as he beheld the inexhaustible variety of expression upon her countenance, whose every change seemed to him only to display fresh loveliness and grace ; but upon this nearer acquaintance, he found far more than anything mere grace and beauty can give, to delight him. His understanding and his heart were both of them more than gratified.

Emma was, in fact, a remarkably clever girl, so clever, that her very ignorance was a source of fresh delight to her husband. He was never wearied of her conversation. Her fancy was so lively—her perception so quick—her feelings so spontaneous and vivid. Every new object seemed to awaken some new faculty.

to enchant him. Every subject he touched upon gave occasion for fresh wonder and admiration at the powers she possessed—at those lively intuitions of truth which seem the prerogative of women, and at which he had arrived by such long processes of laborious thought.

It was a perpetual feast.

Then, her own pleasure in the exercise of these faculties was so intense, her delight in the beauties of nature thus enjoyed so animated. She was so alive to every impression, and withal so childlike, yet so clever—one might almost say so wise—and, added to this intellectual adornment, there was a character all charm.

A sweet, joyous, yielding disposition it was, and beneath it a strength, force, and courage which made him respect—sometimes almost fear—whilst he idolized—her.

This last touch it was which made him adore as he did.

He was a man over whom an ordinary girl, however lovely, would have exercised but a transient sway ; but there was something in the creature he had wedded which seemed to

lay hold of every faculty of his soul. I have used the word adore, and it is the best to express my meaning—it was adoration, rather than love, with which she inspired him.

There was nothing he was not capable of doing to please her. He seemed to live only to gratify her every wish—to see her smiling, bright and content—enjoying herself with all the springing freshness of her youth and temper—this was the highest pleasure he seemed able to enjoy.

Often and often would he sit gazing upon her with an expression in his eyes which must have touched any woman who knew what real life — what man's inconstancy and woman's sorrow is—one who could have estimated the full value of such a heart, and of such a deep and fervent love.

But Emma was too young yet—her spirits too buoyant with springing life. She understood neither herself nor others. She enjoyed the life she was leading very much, and was enchanted with the endless variety of scenery, as they travelled over one beautiful district after another. But she looked outwards, not inwards, for happiness — its source

arose from the glorious objects around her; but was not that true enjoyment lent by the heart, where every object is seen under that charm of mutual love, which sheds a lustre of its own over all.

Even in the very midst of these enchanting scenes, rendered more lovely by beautiful weather which was in itself happiness, "the heart—the heart was lonely still."

Something was wanting.

Something there was craving and unsatisfied; and at such times she could not help wistfully turning to the remembrance of Edward. Yes—even hanging upon William's arm, her thoughts would revert, in spite of herself, to Edward. Alas! what would not all this lovely scenery have been with him?

But she reproached herself bitterly for this feeling, which she called ingratitude, and she strove to drive the image from her mind. At such times she would press her husband's arm, and utter some little, pleasant, affectionate words—doing this with a generous hypocrisy, endeavouring to conceal from herself and from him, what she thought so unworthy a feeling.

But oh! blessed, blessed truth! Where thou art not—effort and hypocrisy are. Their influence is baneful as that of the upas tree.

Where truth is not, there can be neither strength nor freedom—and what is love without freedom and strength? In Emma's case it is certain that this habit she began to contract of well-intended but fatal deceit acted most unfavourably upon her feelings.

Had she found courage from the first to begin life with him upon a radically different system—concealing nothing and affecting nothing—suffering him, with whom she was united so closely, to share every feeling as it arose—know and understand the varied sensations of her heart—the freedom and liberty thus engendered, and the absence of restraint and effort, would have left her open to the natural influence which such an attachment as his must possess over any unsophisticated woman's mind; and this living love would speedily have triumphed over earlier feelings, now buried in the grave; but, unfortunately, the very strain she was put to, in order to satisfy what she thought the

claims of gratitude for the obligations he had conferred, seemed to chill and depress all tenderness.

Love is free as air.

And the more it is left to the enjoyment of perfect freedom, the more strong, wholesome, and vigorous it becomes.

He was not to blame in the least for this—he was not in the least exacting—he was of too proud and delicate a nature to beg for a return—yet it was impossible for him to conceal the rapture which was excited by every mark of affection she bestowed; or the misery which he felt at any—the least—suspicion of coldness upon her part.

Such pain to so great a benefactor it was dreadful to give. Her goodness of heart rendered her a dissembler—a great mistake, though it was a generous mistake.

And now, on a lovely evening at the end of May, the carriage, with its wearied horses, enters a wild and desolate track of country.

High, barren hills, or rather mountains—

dark, broken rocks, and rugged precipices were piled upon each other in such rude confusion, that it seemed as if the beautiful picturesque order of even the wildest forms of creation was at an end—almost as if one were approaching the limits of chaos.

The road wound painfully through, and round, and over these apparently interminable hills, presenting little or no variety, and if change there were, only a change of desolation and ugliness.

They had been travelling in this way for a long time.

Emma sat there, by his side, looking around her ; and her face had become grave, and, as he thought, sad.

She was, in truth, already much worn with the fatigues of the day, and for this last weary stage they had, unfortunately, only been able to procure tired horses, who, scarcely to be got along at more than a foot's pace, added greatly to the tedium of such a journey.

“Let them be—we are in no hurry,” William had said to the postilions.

For Emma had cried out once or twice,

“Oh, those whips! Oh, those whips! Poor creatures, don’t hit them.”

The postilions were checked, and the whips quiet, and then she had leisure to watch the scene around her, whilst he watched nothing but her.

She felt a chill creeping over her.

She knew that she was approaching her home—she was coming to the place where she was in future to live—where she was to settle quietly down, and pass the remainder of her life.—It seemed very savage, dismal, and lonely.

She was to live with William Aubrey,—this very clever and agreeable man, whose society was esteemed by every one so much, and who seemed to devote his life to pleasing her, and yet she felt strangely dull and depressed.

Ah, how unlike that short, short, bright period in London!—She never felt lonely then—anxious, unhappy, miserable, she might be—but never dull and lonely.

The world was but a blank after all.—It was like this barren, monotonous wilderness through which she was passing to her home.

He kept watching that tell-tale face and his own became darker and darker. She sat quietly there, absorbed in her own reflections, for she was bodily too much tired to exert herself, as she usually did, to chat and exert herself to be cheerful. She was too tired to be able to resist the low spirits which seemed ever threatening to creep over her mind if not resolutely opposed, and now she felt so weary and heart-aching that she at last was forced to give way and cease this endless struggling with herself, to keep up vain pretences, and look happier than she was.

So her countenance was for once the true transcript of her mind. This day it was telling no kindly intended lies.

And he continued to read it with excruciating anguish.

She was not happy then—he could not make her happiness. — They were coming home—the excitement of the journey was at an end—a home with him would not suffice her.

He sighed so heavily that she turned round, and, if he had been rendered miserable by the

sadness of her countenance, she was struck and inexpressibly startled at his.

Pity—self-reproach—followed by the sad, sad, attempt at hypocrisy as usual succeeded,—

“What is the matter, dear William? You look quite ill,” she cried, endeavouring to shake off her own expression and low spirits.

“Nay, I might say what is the matter with you. Poor child! You do not like this coming home.”

“Why it’s not very pretty just here”—she said striving to answer cheerily. “But I shall like it by and by, I dare say—you know I adore mountain scenery.”

“No, don’t say that—it is impossible you should like this scenery. But tell me, Emma—is it the present scene, or is it—the prospect of spending a great part of your life at the house upon the other side with me, which terrifies you—you looked so sad just now—so little like a bride approaching, for the first time, that home which she is to share with the man she loves—”

“Did I look sad—Oh it’s only that I am so excessively tired—I am sure I was not

thinking of anything so much as of getting to the end of our journey—I am so very tired.”

“ We do go at a most wearisome pace— Shall I tell the men to get on ? ” —

“ No—no—the poor horses— ” and she looked out of the carriage window again ; there was a turn in the road, winding round a great broad hill which quite shut out the view,—“ Oh dear ” she cried, when, as they mounted it, only a succession of fresh uplands of the same description presented themselves, —“ I *did* hope for something better. When will this come to an end ? ”

“ We shall soon be at our journey’s end, now.”

“ But, dear me ! I do hope . . . ”

And here she checked herself—

“ What does Emma hope ? ”

“ Oh ! nothing—nothing— ”

“ Why will you put me off with that everlasting — nothing — nothing ! Emma, you know I only live in the endeavour to gratify every slightest wish of yours—you know, my child, I only exist, if possible, to make you happy — I am like the doting man,

who bade his mistress not gaze so intently upon a particular star—because ‘I cannot give it to you, you know.’”

“What a pretty thought!—well, I will not gaze at a particular star.”

“But what is it you do gaze upon—what is it you want or wish?”

“If I must speak out, then—that my new home—*our* new home—may not be just—just like this place.”

He smiled and looked relieved.

At that moment the road turned once more, and they entered darker glens between mountains, more frowning than ever, and the aspect far from improved, as they became aware of columns of thick murky smoke rising up from various places, and mingling with the lowering clouds of a dusky sky. The adjacent vallies seemed filled with it. The glen now widened, and was strewn with cinders and ashes, presenting no vestige of vegetation except now and the some tufts of coarse grass, whilst, rising like a huge mountain wall just opposite, was a black broken ridge of hideous rocks. It looked horribly dismal as it stretched gloomily across, and seemed to shut up the intervening valley.

“Worse and worse,” he said, and smiled—whilst she shuddered, and felt half inclined to be vexed and hurt at that smile; which seemed almost a mockery of her melancholy, depressed feelings.

“Courage, my love,” he went on—“One more tiresome hill to clamber up, and we are at our journey’s end.”

She could not help sighing a little—She felt the more depressed the more his cheerfulness seemed to increase. The approach to home, which appeared to gladden him, produced a very different effect upon her. She had never before visited, never had pictured to herself—a scene so savage, barren, desolate, and unpleasing as the one before her; and they were within a short distance of what was to be her home!

It is one of the worst effects of a marriage ungladdened by the divine influence of genuine love, to make a woman so dependent for her happiness upon circumstances. With such a heart as hers, had Emma really loved, every place, so that her husband were by her side, would have been delightful—every home acceptable. The barrenest wilderness would

have smiled under that magic ray. Now, matters bore their real aspect, and how few of mortal things can stand the broad daylight of an eye unblessed by old associations of the heart, by recollections of childhood, or tradition of ancestors, or the sweet influences of purest affection. She did not say this to herself, but she felt it.

It was natural that he should be pleased. *He* was going to his home; but how cold, and strange, and disagreeable everything looked to *her*.

And so they crossed this hideous, smoking valley, with their tired horses creeping at so languid a pace along, that she had time to observe everything—to listen to the noise of jarring steam-engines at work—of carts rattling along the blackened railroad—of the thunder of hammers falling, and all the other discordant sounds that belong to machinery. Huge wheels were turning horizontally at the mouths of the pits, near which lurid fires were burning. Vast chimneys raised their inky columns to the sky, giving forth volumes of smoke, and Cyclopean figures with blackened faces, and, as it appeared to her, of gigantic

stature, were seen at intervals issuing from the hovels and other buildings, and pursuing their dismal-looking tasks.

"I own it is very ugly, all this, my dear Emma," as, her arm hanging in the loop of lace by the window, she clung, half-terrified—not to him—no, but to the side of the carriage—"but you must recollect, my love, that from this source it is that we draw the wealth which—" he paused, and in a feeling tone added, "will have not the slightest value for me, unless it make my Emma happy."

"Oh! I shall be happy!" she cried. "*I will* be happy," the good, well-intentioned heart added silently.

And now they begin to ascend the steep road, formed of blackened cinders, which leads to the summit of this precipitous ridge.

Slowly and toilsomely they made their way. At last the crown of the hill is reached. She expected to open upon a wide, extended view at length; but, as often happens, she was again disappointed. The road had been cut through the crest of the hill, so that when it was surmounted, a traveller found himself between two steep walls of earth, which, as

the way widened, between them effectually shut out the view.

Through this defile they proceeded about a mile, than which nothing can be imagined more gloomy and unpromising; but the longest lane must have its turning—the most weary day its end.

There was a somewhat abrupt angle, and then, at once, the view for which he had been waiting in silent patience, burst upon them.

There it spread beneath her feet in all its glory.

Glowing under the rays of a setting sun, which poured a flood of yellow light over the landscape, a wide plain was spread, extending for leagues and leagues, circumscribed by a splendid horizon of distant mountains. Woods and groves, and dark towers, and lawns; country seats, and lakes, were gleaming in the sun. No picture of Claude Lorraine ever excelled the beauty of this remarkable view—The sides of the ridge from which she looked down formed a long slope, adorned with richly-wooded tufts, of every variety of outline and colour, and gently descending to the plain; whilst about midway upon the

hill, the lordly mansion itself, in all the pride of its rich architecture and fine proportions, rose from a paradise of gardens and shrubberies, now all purpling with flowers—for the magnificent rhododendrons, than which there were at that time no finer in England, were in full bloom.

She was silent with surprise and pleasure.

He said not one word, but gazed upon that kindling face with rapture. At last he spoke.

“Well, my dear—how do you like it?”

“Oh!” she cried, turning towards him, her whole countenance beaming, “it is the most beautiful, beautiful thing I ever saw in my life—I never beheld such a view. One would never be tired of looking at it. Ah! you were very malicious to keep this a secret so long; and I protest there is not the slightest clank of an engine to be heard, nor the least particle of smoke to be seen. And how sweetly thrushes and blackbirds are singing. Oh! they are very glad to be here.”

“Can *you* make yourself happy here, my sweet girl, do you think?”

“Can I?—I should be the most unreason-

able, ungrateful being that ever was, if I could not."

"But shall we go on?"

"Oh! I am sorry to lose the view—but let us go on."

And the carriage proceeded, and went winding among the woods, which were picturesque and beautiful to the last degree, and now shining in all the red and golden glory of May. The ground was starred with primroses, or floored, as it were, with lapis lazuli, so thick were the blue hyacinth and pink lychnis growing. The birds were making the air vocal with their songs this sweet spring evening—the sun gleaming upon the distant lakes—the clock sounding from a neighbouring church tower—the sky all crimson, purple and gold.

I want powers to describe—I run into confusion. It was so very beautiful, all—and such a rich variety of beauty.

And now they arrived at a rustic lodge, covered over with crimson roses, honeysuckles, and virgin's bower, till it was almost buried in sweets, and they entered the grounds, at this time of the year in their highest beauty.

Rhododendrons, azaleas, kalmias, laburnums, acacias, heaps of lilacs, and guelder roses—everything that is delicious in shrubby plants—were growing in profusion. Every object seemed to proclaim the enormous wealth of the possessor—his taste and his magnificence.

She was again silent with astonishment and admiration.

“My father was fond of this place,” he said, as he watched the changes of her speaking countenance. “He was never tired of adorning it; he had great taste and a love for gardening, which made him delight in assembling the choicest specimens he could obtain from every quarter of the globe—whatever plants can flourish in our climate, may, I think, be found here. He had great opportunities of obtaining what he wished through his innumerable foreign correspondents—the effect of what he has done is not bad.”

“Oh! it is charming!—lovely! I never saw anything the least to compare to it.”

And she continued gazing with delight, and he watching with far more than equal delight.

When suddenly a cloud passed over her face, as an April cloud may pass over the sun, and the moisture sprang to her eye.

For there was a vision of one plunging in the cruel, oblivious waters, one to whom this exquisite scene had been dedicated—but he should see it no more. There was one who should have possessed it, and who would have enjoyed the possession so intensely!

“Poor Edward!” her heart whispered—
“Poor, poor Edward.”

“What is it, Emma?—did you speak? You look sorrowful.”

She turned her eyes suddenly upon him.

“And you, too?”

“*I* sorrowful. What should make either of us sorrowful just at this moment. What is it, my love?”

“We should not forget . . .”

But his face changed so suddenly—he looked at once so excessively miserable, that she stopped herself, and went on, changing her tone—

“What is extremely beautiful is apt to move me to tears.”

He stretched out his hand to take hers—his own was trembling like a leaf.

But he recovered himself as usual by an effort, and at this moment the carriage making a turn gave to the view the magnificent front of the house, and the gravelled terrace, or rather esplanade, before the door.

Magnificent in truth the mansion looked, with stately trees hanging upon the banks around and behind it, and the fine terrace in front—the low wall ornamented with stone vases, filled with flowers—the glorious landscape below spreading far away.

They drove under a splendid *porte cochère*, and the carriage stopped.

CHAPTER IV.

'Gin living worth could win my heart,
Ye suld na plead in vain.—

SCOTCH SONG.

THE carriage door was opened, and William Aubrey, springing out, gave his hand to his fair bride, and placing her arm in his, together they ascended the steps, and by richly-ornamented folding doors now thrown wide open, entered a lofty hall—the fine marble columns and fretted roof being shaded from too glaring a light by the colouring of the painted glass of the lancet windows, which sprung from floor to roof.

He stood still a few moments, as if to give her time to look round, and as she did so, her eyes fell upon a female figure, advancing towards them from among the arches opposite to her.

It was that of a middle-aged woman, whose face and form still bore the vestiges of extraordinary beauty and character. She was plainly dressed in black silk, with a white cap having almost the appearance of a widow's cap, so simple was the oval it described round the face—hair black as the raven's wing was folded plainly under it, beneath which appeared ebony eyebrows, a magnificent forehead, and eyes dark and penetrating, which gleamed with a sort of mournful splendour.

They were fixed upon that married pair before her, with a certain sad, earnest, interest, partaking more of that feeling with which a sorrowing, widowed mother might regard her happy children, than of an upper servant receiving her master and mistress. However, her appearance at once showed her to be an upper servant.

She moved towards them as they stood still, for so soon as William Aubrey was aware of her presence, he had stopped and waited her approach, as a mark of due observance to his bride—now queen and mistress of his household.

“Alice,” he said—“Mrs Craven, I mean—I present you to your future mistress.”

The person addressed made a low curtsy, intended, no doubt, to be respectful and almost reverential; but it wanted something of that expression. Possibly the slight, girlish appearance of the beautiful Emma had not power to impose sufficiently upon the imagination to excite that sort of feeling.

Emma looked up, and regarded Mrs Craven with considerable interest, for she at once divined who she must be. No doubt this was the person intrusted to select the trousseau, of whom they had spoken together—concerning whom she had felt the first touch of jealousy that she perhaps had ever in her life known; and immediately the disagreeable reflection arose, that this very person must be aware of that humbling transaction about the trousseau

—a secret she would have hidden from every eye, and wished to forget herself. She did not feel inclined to like Mrs Craven at all the better for having been concerned in this matter; and she saw, or fancied she saw, something in her face and manner not at all like what she had been accustomed to in a domestic servant.

So the young lady gave more attention to the aspect of her future housekeeper than she would have bestowed upon any other person at such a time; and the more she looked the less pleased she was—she could not in the least tell why—but a sort of dislike, and a kind of superstitious fear was creeping over her, when suddenly it struck her that she had seen the face before. She could not at all remember where, but the vague recognition was accompanied with a certain pain. Something was connected with that impression ominous and disagreeable. It boded her no good—there was a presentiment of evil associated with it.

She acknowledged Mrs Craven's salutation, and then, turning rather abruptly away, said,

“Let us go on somewhere else.”

He made no answer; but looking again towards Alice, said,

“I shall never learn to call you anything but Alice, I am afraid, Mrs Craven, and scarcely recognise you in your new dignity. Marshal us the way to the dining-room, will you, if you please?”

“I thought you would prefer the library, Mr Aubrey. I have made a little fire there—it is rather chilly this evening,” was the reply, with a something in her air which gave one to understand that what she decided on as best *was* best, and what she judged best was to be.

“Shall we go there first, my love?”

“Anywhere you like; but I don’t feel chilly at all—I don’t think we want a fire, do you?” she said, turning to her husband, displeased, she scarce knew why.

What was it about this woman’s way of accosting Mr Aubrey that displeased Lady Emma so much? She did not know herself; she only felt that she had taken quite a dislike to her.

She thought she appeared stern and cross, and, besides, she had caught her once or twice

looking at herself with a scrutinizing expression of the eye, such as she did not think it became a mere servant to use towards her mistress; and she felt inclined to assert her own authority, and refuse to go into the library, merely because Mrs Craven had arranged it so.

“Will you go to your boudoir then, Lady Emma?—Alice, I think your mistress will perhaps like to be introduced to her own apartment first.”

“There is no fire there—I had the fire lighted in your library—I thought you would be so glad to find yourself among your books again.”

“I don’t care quite so much for my books as I once did,” he answered with a smile—
“Emma, I fear I shall be a sad trespasser in your boudoir if you do not forbid me—shall we go there at once.”

“No, let it be the library as Mrs, Mrs—what is your name, pray, I did not catch it—as Mrs—Mrs” . . .

“Craven, madam.”

“As Mrs Craven seems to have settled that it is so to be.”

And with a look of something very like ill-humour, not often seen in that very pretty face, and which certainly was not particularly becoming to it, Emma followed Mrs Craven, who, without uttering a word more, turned to lead the way, and crossing the marble of the hall floor—they came to a rich mahogany and gilded door, which she threw open and ushered them into the library.

This was a fine room well worthy of the hall by which it was approached. It was nobly proportioned, large, and lofty, and was in fact the finest room in the house. The walls were surrounded with massive book-cases fitted with volumes of every description for show, for use, for curiosity—bindings of morocco and gold, the well-known books for study, and the little homely black volumes, bespeaking curious editions, were here—admirable busts of the world's great worthies adorned the corners of the book-shelves — one or two grave majestic pieces of sculpture were in the corners of the room; in the middle was a table loaded with portfolios and volumes of valuable prints, around which a few choice statuettes of

unparalleled beauty stood—a fire blazed cheerfully in the wide chimney, lighting up the severe grandeur of a massive mantle piece of fine black marble from the Arriège, and before the fire stood a small table already prepared for a sort of mingled tea and dinner, and looking everything that was most comfortable and home-like. Two delicious chairs stood ready placed one at each end of it.

The fire, in spite of the time of year and fineness of the evening, was far from being unacceptable—as Emma would have confessed, if it had not been for its association with Mrs Craven's arrangements.

“Well,” said William Aubrey looking round, “I think the fire looks very comfortable—and you will confess, my dear Emma, that Alice. . . I mean Mrs Craven, was right—I never shall learn to call you by that name, Alice,” he repeated, “do what I will.”

“I have ordered tea and a cutlet or so,”—said Mrs Craven, coming forward with the sort of proud humility of manner, belonging to one, possessing a right to claim a higher place than that she occupied.

“ Was that as you would like it, sir—I thought you would like it best so.”

“ Ask Lady Emma, not me—I am no longer master of this house, Alice, remember *that*—I am only the most humble and devoted slave to its gracious mistress, and so she shall ever find me”—he added with an air of affectionate and almost playful gallantry.

He was in far better spirits than she had ever seen him before, and certainly appeared greatly to advantage. He was glad to be at home—and as master of his house there was an addition of ease and dignity to his manner, which one could not but think highly became him.

Why was she not better pleased with the alteration? There was something she did not quite like. As he became more at ease, he seemed to her fancy to lose something of what was interesting about him. Besides, she imputed the change to the influence of Mrs Craven, probably that took all grace from it in her eyes.

Mrs Craven upon her side seemed as little inclined to be pleased, as Emma herself.

Poor William Aubrey! his womankind seem already preparing troubles for him.

“ Shall I send up dinner then, at once, sir” — asked Mrs Craven in a rather huffed voice.

“ Ask your mistress—ask Lady Emma Aubrey—My dear—how will you have it?”

“ Quite indifferent to me—Just as it has pleased Mrs Craven to settle it, only for heaven’s sake, my good woman, let us have something soon— I am dying of hunger”—added the young lady, who appeared as determined to assume the part and place of head of the mansion, as it seemed to be Mrs Craven’s intention to dispute it.

And then she turned somewhat haughtily away and went to the window, and began to look out into the flower garden which lay before it, walled in with those blooming groves of rhododendrons, and azalias—and to gaze upon the lovely evening sky, a sight to harmonise the soul of any one.

Mrs Craven left the room, and then William Aubrey followed his Emma to the window.

“ Excuse her, Emma, for my sake—she is rough—but she is faithful.”

“ There are faithful people in the world I

should imagine, that are not quite so rude and strange."

"But not that stand in the same relation to me—You! an Irish girl, and disown the tie which binds to one's foster mother."

"Foster mothers in Ireland are loving and respectful."

"She is a singular woman—remarkable in many ways—of higher education than is common in her rank—we must forgive something to one, apparently born to better prospects. Something to the extraordinary clearness of intellect and strength of character which she possesses—something to a more than common power of attachment on her part—something to her care and affection for me—I am under obligations to her, which I can never repay. Spare me, Emma, upon this one point, and I will not ask your indulgence upon any other."

"Obligations!—You to her!—and I to you."

"Oh Emma!—Emma, that *is* unkind."

"Forgive me, forgive me, William," all her better and more generous feelings rushing to her heart as the thought of all that he had done so generously and delicately—and with

that all her ill-humour subsided, her better feelings spoke again, she felt ashamed of herself, and turning to her husband—

“Dear William, forgive me—you must forgive me—I am but a child, and I have been wayward and naughty—I am as bad as Rosamond in the school-room book, who took a dislike to the clever lady, because of the pinch in her black bonnet I do believe I have no better reason for taking a dislike to your Mrs Craven—but forgive me this once, and I will promise to like her very much next time we meet ; and pay her back by my gentle attention for all her aching arms and weary hours, when carrying you about as a baby.—I dare say I shall like her quite naturally in time.”

“Say no more, say no more, you are an angel—oh Emma ! Do I not love you?—”

And all the strength of his passion was gleaming in his deep, dark eyes—as, in the words of poor Othello, he added in a lower voice—“and, when I love thee not—chaos is come again.”

CHAPTER V.

And I will give thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies ;
So thou wilt only constant prove,
To live with me and be my love.

COTTON.

EMMA rose the next morning blythe and joyous, refreshed by a slumber, sound and soothing as that of an infant ; and her heart expanding to enjoyment and happiness. The present scene, so gloriously beautiful, was all in all—the life of the day, everything—the past, and with it the sad mournful spectres of the faded dead, forgotten.

Her bed room was fitted up in all the soft

luxury of the most elaborate modern taste. A side door opened into a dressing and bath room, arranged luxuriously, with everything that could ensure real comfort or gratify the eye. The suite of apartments terminated in the boudoir. And here in this nest, peculiarly her own, everything that was beautiful in nature and art seemed lavished around, as if in homage to the idol who was to be there enshrined.

The walls were painted in panels, with flowers that rivalled the loveliest hues and forms of nature; the rich branches, and the lovely pendant, and tendrils, giving to the whole the appearance of a living bower. A white and gold bookcase, delicately carved, was filled with rows of little tempting volumes. Settees, and couches, and chairs of all sorts of pretty comfortable shapes, and lovely inlaid tables, stood scattered about in most pleasant negligence, whilst against one side of the wall was one of those rare cabinets, set with imitations of fruits in precious agates, cornelians, and jaspers, which we all learned since so to admire at the Crystal

Palace. Opposite to which stood the prettiest of miniature pianofortes. The carpet was as if strewn with wild flowers—wild roses, blue bells, sweet harebell, and daisies—fresh as if just brought in from the woods and fields, and too lightly and delicately worked to appear elaborate or gaudy. The chimney-piece was malachite, the door inlaid with mother of pearl. . . .

Such was the temple William Aubrey had prepared for his divinity.

One little thing yet remains to be mentioned. . . . A drawer of the cabinet, which stood partly open, and in which a bag of rich gold embroidered tissue was lying—heavy with good sterling sovereigns.

He had left her before she had opened her eyes that morning ; and she had the pleasure of exploring the beautiful little retreat prepared for her, quite alone. She enjoyed it all the more because she was unburdened by the nervous difficulty of expressing her gratitude, and she felt more truly obliged to him for the delicacy of having withdrawn himself from her first burst of delighted surprise, than for

all the beautiful things he had prepared for her.

Gratitude!—At least the apprehension that she should not express herself as she ought—that she should not enough show the delighted admiration he would be so greatly disappointed if she did not feel, would else have tormented her. She was always afraid that she should not say what she ought—that she should appear insensible—that she should fall short of his expectations! these difficulties, however, do not perplex the heart where the giver is entirely and thoroughly beloved—perfect love casteth out such fear.

In this instance, being left to herself, she was exempted for the present from such trouble, and like a bird, or like a curious child she fluttered about from one object to another, examining this, and admiring that, till the excitement of this new pleasure had a little subsided, and then she sat down upon a sofa in this beautiful boudoir—and—sighed!

Looked round—and sighed.—For again at that very moment rose up, as it were fatally,

a vision of a cruel sea of surging billows beating against the rocks—of one falling, sinking—and the waters closing over an upturned face.

But she strove to shake off the vision.

And amid all this variety of feelings which had occupied her from the time she left the altar to this very hour, I am not aware that one single genuine reference to her Creator had blessed or sanctified them—that one genuine, truthful sentiment of religion had visited her young heart.

Not that I intend to say she did not night and morning mechanically repeat her prayers ;—or that an indistinct sense of right—that it was everybody's duty to do right, was not habitual to her—so habitual that it acted upon her rather as an instinct than as a principle—

For she had besides an excellent nature—Gratitude, affection, and kindness, were inherent in it—and gratitude is a rare and so precious a quality, as almost to be a warrant for the existence of every other good quality—a more grateful heart could not exist—

But it was not gratitude that Edward had

inspired; there had been no opportunity for him to excite feelings of that nature—they had loved each other, that was all—loved each other too well for obligation.

William, upon the other hand, had loaded her with obligations—To him she owed her life, the rescue of her family from irretrievable ruin—of her sisters and brothers from the most dangerous of situations—herself from poverty and hardship.—He had carried her away, and placed her in a paradise of delights—in every arrangement of which the spirit of his intense love was visible!

He was so generous too!—he exacted nothing in return for all this.

If her heart felt weighed down and oppressed by his benefits, this was no fault of his—he seemed to wish for, to expect no thanks—to be allowed to indulge her was all he asked; and if, at times, some little mark of spontaneous affection was bestowed upon him, he seemed to feel it as a blessing beyond his hopes, and totally to forget all he had done to merit it—

Certainly nothing could be more delicate than his conduct.

Alas!—alas!—wayward heart!—Will all this only burden you the more?

But a truce to such thoughts.

She started up from a reverie into which she had fallen. The tall casement windows of her room were partly open, they led to a high balcony filled with flowers. She stepped out, and gazed upon the shrubberies, and terraced walks, and lawns, that lay before her—

Just in front the lawn spread towards a break in the shrubberies, which gave a view of the splendid distant landscape. The sun had been some time risen this sweet May morning, and was glittering upon the dewy grass, and upon the leaves and flowers of the lovely shrubberies, and seeming to call the distant prospect into life. I know nothing so beautiful as an early May morning. It has a peculiar character of its own, a something that is found wanting in all other mornings of the year, be they never so serene and fair.

There is such a life in nature!—

Such fresh brightness in the sun!—such a burst of fresh, glad existence, among the new leaves and flowers—such busy, garrulous talking and fluttering among the little birds

and their callow broods—such joyous voice of singing in every brake.

She was inhaling it all—enjoying in a way she had never known before, this lovely, flowery land of England, and the singing, fragrant May morning—when, coming out of one of the shrubby walks, she saw a dark figure advancing. Slowly and pensively he walked along, his whole attitude, even at that distance, giving an irresistible impression of suffering and melancholy,—

She knew him at once—it was her husband. To catch up her shawl and bonnet, fling the one upon her head and the other over her shoulders, run down stairs, and through the side hall, and out by a glass door, and so to cross the grass, and to link her arm in his, and to look up in his face—with that bright, happy, grateful smile of hers, was the impulse and the work of a moment.

“What a lovely—lovely morning!—and what a sweet, delightful place!—and oh! I do not know what to admire the most—in the house, or out of the house. Ah! but it must be out of the house—out of the house—Was ever anything so beautiful!”

“Are you pleased, my love,” he said with a smile—but there was deep, there was profound sadness in the smile.

“Pleased,” she echoed—“who can help being pleased!—Oh William, William”—it was not Mr Aubrey now—“What a charming, charming world this is.”

“You have got your hat on, I see,”—he went on—“Shall we stroll a little further?”

It seemed as if his only interval of ease from hidden painful thought was when she was by his side—why was this? Was it that he still distrusted her affection, and needed that bright smile to assure him of it—Whence the never-dying worm that lay there cankering at his heart?

A melancholy disposition, perhaps, nothing more.

He looked so pale. Those beautiful dark features of his, so finely cut and chiselled, gave, may be, this peculiar expression of sadness—it is rarely, perhaps never, that such a delicately-constructed frame is not in itself assurance of a melancholy temperament.

But all this cloud of sadness seemed almost entirely to disappear when she was with him,

and indeed the joyous animation of her young face—the radiant happiness of her spirit this morning was enough to illuminate despondency itself.

And so they strolled on together, forgetting the hour of breakfast, visiting various points, discovering fresh beauties in every step. She was revelling in these delights, so new to her and yet so consonant with her genius. It seemed to her as if she had never known what life could give before—this exquisite nature! these rich inexhaustible treasures of nature!

Oh, how his eyes followed her with delight! his classical fancy likening her to some of those haunting nymphs of the stream and the woods, fair beings, that forsook the world when the great veil of falsehood was rent in twain, and with so much that was bad and vile, things so full of beauty and poetry for ever passed away—musingly he walked, indulging these sweetest visions—during the present brief moments the gnawing worm within was still.

And so he sauntered on, watching her, as like some bright creature of the element, her

white drapery flowing around her, and the ribbons of her straw hat playing in the air, she fluttered from flower to flower, from one charming object to another.—

It was between twelve and one o'clock before they either of them remembered that there was such a thing in the world as breakfast.

They came in—entering by the little glass side door; and so, through the low twilight back hall, and so through the lofty gorgeous great hall, and so through an ante-room—and so, into a cool, green, shady breakfast room, where upon a round table, the breakfast set of fine transparent china—looking more transparently delicate than the most delicate alabaster—the silver tea kettle bubbling over its spirit lamp, and the piles of fine fruits, and flowers were standing to receive them.

So they had been standing for many hours, and so had Alice, otherwise Mrs Craven, been waiting to receive them also—not that there appeared to be the slightest necessity for her waiting thus, but she seemed to choose not to be altogether banished.

And therefore she had assumed to herself as

a pretended duty, the office of being present at breakfast time to pour out the tea for her master and mistress.

She had, indeed, regularly performed this office for William Aubrey ever since she had entered his family ; and she seemed to have made up her mind not to regard the difference between the present and his solitary bachelor state, but to be resolved to maintain the old custom, or rather, privilege.

They came in together, looking so well content.

Emma, blooming like a fresh opened rose, with her hair all dishevelled by the wind, her straw hat thrown lightly on the back of her head ; her pink and embroidered ribbons falling to her knee ; her hands filled with wild flowers, —and William looking, as Alice had never seen him look before—no longer the pale, thoughtful, abstracted ponderer and thinker—but the ardent, the impassioned, poet and lover.

And as she looked upon them, her heart was filled with bitterness.

Envy and jealousy were busy there. Her's was one of those unhappy natures, that can

sympathise, it is true, with sorrow, but which pale and sicken in the presence of joy—like some unwholesome plants, that shelter under the dark heavy shade and perish in the bright sunshine, and the genial blowing air.

She had wished his happiness, had laboured for his happiness, had agonised in his agonies, and wept tears of blood over his despair—and now when he was happy, when she was a witness of that bliss to which through life he had been a stranger; she could not bear it.

Such feelings are more common than we are aware—nature teaches all but the most hardened and perverted, to weep with those that weep—but the divine master of nature, that heavenly teacher himself it was who enjoined us to rejoice in another's joy.

Alice had not been the author of this joy—She had lent a hand, it is true, to the marriage, but the happiness she was now witnessing sprung from a source independent of her. Nay, this very joy would in itself prove a cause of severance. People are rarely wanted to sympathise in joy—he had done with sorrow now, and of what use would *she* be—her vocation was at an end.

Alice was not generous enough to bear these thoughts.

What should she be now, her embittered spirit kept asking.

His housekeeper, perhaps — allowed as a favour to look after his domestic interests, keep the family in order, and write out the bills of fare—his servant—his faithful, lightly regarded servant—that was what she would merge into now.

Was that the fitting place for her?—and after all she had done and suffered for him?

She looked at William Aubrey with a strange wistful expression of face; but he only gave her a slight nod of recognition as she stood waiting there, and passing on without further notice, went cheerfully up to the table and lifting the lid of the silver kettle, said—

“Is the water still hot—have you made the tea”—then opening the tea-pot lid;—

“The tea is made—we must not keep you, Alice”—and thus saying, he sat down close by the side of Emma, and began to inquire what she would have, and to help her assiduously to breakfast.

Alice instantly left the room.

Through the splendid hall, and down the long, long galleries she went, her heart overflowing with bitterness—long and long were the galleries, and a weary way it seemed, before she reached her housekeeper's room—her own, her sanctum—for the house was extravagantly large, and it was a sort of journey from one side of it to the other.

The individuals in these vast houses are often almost as much separated from each other as if they lived in different portions of a city. More especially the gulph which separates the several departments, the housekeeper's and steward's room for instance, from the drawing rooms and saloons, &c.—appears impassable.

In London, and during the bachelor life of William Aubrey, Alice had been in a manner admitted into the same sphere as that of her foster son, who never assumed the character of master, but had ever treated her with the affectionate familiarity of near relationship rather than with the reserve of a superior.

In truth he had felt bound to her by a tie closer and dearer than any of the relationships he had known, for his memory was filled

with instances of early kindness and care, and with the proofs of a most devoted, even passionate attachment.

As life had proceeded, he, the neglected and heart-wounded boy, had in that unremitting devotion and fond partiality sought for and found comfort ; as a man—a man suffering from delicate health, susceptible nerves, and extreme but proud and reserved sensibility, he had found in the affection of Alice that consolation and refuge, which such a character requires, and finds only among near and dear female relations.

Her mind, which had been educated in a manner far above her station ; the energy of her character ; a something singularly refined, in her manner and tone of thought ; had rendered this tie more than ordinarily strong. William respected, still more than he loved, his nurse. Yet Alice had not been raised above her place. William seemed to judge it best not to elevate her to what he would have considered a false position in society, by taking her out of the sphere of her ordinary companions ; but he lived with her upon the most affectionate and confidential

terms, and Alice was perfectly satisfied and happy. Among other privileges she possessed, as we have seen, that of free ingress into her favourite's private apartments at any hour she judged proper. A privilege extended to no other living creature. She had assumed the care of his wardrobe, in which office she took the highest and most zealous pleasure, suffering no hands but her own, to meddle with, to mend, or to wash, his linen.

Even the most menial offices when performed for him, seemed to assume a sanctity and dignity in her eyes.

In these humble but affectionate offices, she had found herself, as I have said, perfectly content so far as her own relations with her favourite were concerned, her peace being only disturbed by the bitter resentment she nourished at any act of injustice as regarded him, which she might chance to witness, resulting from the partiality shown to his brother.

Nothing could exceed the intensity of her feelings upon this head, her jealousy and envy amounted almost to malignity. She indulged herself in quite hating Edward, and from a mere child, had looked upon him with an

evil eye, which would have blighted if it could.

She had submitted to all these past troubles with a murmuring, rebellious heart, but now a more formidable cause for jealousy had arisen. She who had been privileged to come and go as she would ; who, though she consorted with the servants and heard all the gossip of the servants' hall, had at the same time the entrée, as it were, of the higher apartments—gifted with a clear instinct of truth, as she was, speedily divined how matters stood as regarded the attachment of the two brothers to Lady Emma Mor-daunt. This was too much ; and a passionate vow escaped her lips that it should never be—that Edward should not rob his brother of his love as well as of his inheritance. In this cause she had agonised, and she had laboured ; she had done everything but *pray*.—And now her most ardent hopes had been surpassed, her efforts been crowned with triumphant success ; the shadow which stood between the sun and her beloved one had disappeared, and anguish and mortification had been exchanged for unbounded triumph.

There he stood, undisputed master of these immense possessions; his wealth increased to an incalculable, almost fabulous degree, by the new discoveries—and now he had won and brought home that beautiful bride, whom she had so often sworn in her secret soul that in defiance of every obstacle he should possess.

Those nights of rage and tears—those burning impatiences—the intolerable suspenses—the fever of hope—the shudderings of despair were over.

He was rich, and great, and wedded, and happy beyond measure.—

And now where was she?

We few of us know how much selfishness lies at the root of most passionate desires.

She thought she had only desired his advancement for his own sake; that she could have been contented to die so she could have secured it; and contented to die, perhaps, she might have been—but to live in the endurance of this jealous wretchedness she found to be a very different thing.

Where was he?—

At the summit of wealth and power—a wealth and power almost regal.—

And she ?

In the housekeeper's room.

The old relations, too, were all changed.

She was no longer the nurse, and the friend and comforter of the reserved and melancholy bachelor; treating him as a child and pet, in the midst of all the respect she showed him. She had risen in the domestic ranks; he had placed her at the head of his magnificent establishment—from plain Alice in her cotton gown she was become Mrs Craven in black silk and rings—But, ah ! she was no longer William Aubrey's; she was the Lady Emma Aubrey's housekeeper !

She came back to her room ; a room fitted up with everything that could give comfort to her life or dignity to her office—but what was all this to her ? This ill-suppressed jealousy was stinging her to the heart. She sat down and wept bitterly.

There are different descriptions of tears. There are the tears that relieve the over-charged breast, and fall like the heavenly dew, softening and healing—such are the

tears of the gentle, and the good, the patient, and resigned—but there are scalding tears, wrung by agony from eyes unused to weep, from the proud resentful spirit that scorns to submit. And such were Alice's tears.

Bitter in the extreme her tears were, wrung from the labouring spirit, but neither refreshing nor healing. She brushed them away impatiently; and her countenance, far from being softened by the indulgence, assumed a more harsh and hardened expression than ever.

Pride and scorn—such as spring from a heart like hers, the victim of signal ingratitude, were written there. Yet, surely, she overrated her claims. What, if she had been a kind nurse; most foster nurses, whatever else they may be, are tender to the being that has hung upon the breast; that strong tie of nature which rivets the mother to her child is felt in almost an equal degree for the foster parent.

Why, then, did she look upon herself as entitled to a gratitude, respect, love, and observance, which William, affectionate to her and considerate as he was, did not seem inclined to admit; and which it was evi-

dently Lady Emma's intention to keep within strict bounds, if not openly to disavow?

It is vain to inquire. The temper of Alice was ardent, and exacting. Nothing short of the most devoted and almost exclusive affection, it was plain, could satisfy her.

And this she must no longer hope to enjoy.

Everything around her was utterly changed. His heart was another's, and another formed, and was but too well calculated to form, his entire happiness. Alice looked upon that fair bride, and her eyes were jaundiced with jealousy. She who had been so anxious to secure his happiness, would now have been but too glad to have seen him less happy, but it would not do. The most jaundiced eye could not disguise to her the charms possessed by this young creature, with that sweet, natural, expression of face—that eye so bright and true—those winning smiles and sweet bird-like tones of voice!

The beautiful vision haunted poor Alice like some evil demon.

She indulged, as I have said, in the weakness of tears, but only for a few seconds. As if ashamed of having yielded to it in the least,

she hastily dashed the drops from her eyes, and, going to a drawer, took out her white linen working apron, and began, with a sort of haughty humility, to employ herself in the every-day business proper to her office.

She opened cupboards, took out sweetmeats, called for her preserving pans and baskets of green fruit, and began to prepare her green gooseberry cheese, or green gooseberries dried as hops; and so on, and so on; her heart swelling, her cheek burning, and in a humour that would better have become a fallen empress than the denizen of a housekeeper's room.

CHAPTER VI.

He has a lean and canker'd look—
Let no such man be trusted.

ANON.

I HAVE given you a sort of preface to the tale which followed.

Such were the feelings with which these three respectively began their new life together.

William Aubrey, still in the first infatuation of passion, loving, not wisely but too well—seeming to endeavour thus to deaden the sense of secret pain—as others, to escape themselves, have rushed to the wine vault or the gaming table.

Emma was divided between her enjoyment of the scenes that surrounded her; the anxiety to satisfy her husband's heart with that copy of true love which was all she could give him;

her endeavours to amuse herself and pass the time away in a situation which was, after all, somewhat lonely; and her determination to resist the encroachments of Mrs Craven, and to preserve her own place and supremacy. Not that Mrs Craven openly attempted to invade her authority. She was outwardly obedient, humble, and respectful to excess; but nothing could be more sullen than her obedience, more proud than her humility, more cold than her respect. If in anything she was crossed or contradicted, she became silently sulky; but she seldom afforded herself this excuse of her tempers—she rarely proposed any measure, leaving everything to be arranged by her inexperienced young lady. And when any matters, in consequence, went amiss, betraying her triumph, only by a certain ironical smile and a peculiar expression of the eye—so masked by the obsequiousness of her manner, that it was impossible to complain upon the subject.

But the most disagreeable thing to which Emma felt herself exposed was, certain, silent, but ceaseless scrutiny, exercised over her upon the part of Mrs Craven. She seemed

to read every thought and feeling, and listen to every word that escaped her, in a manner that made her young mistress feel almost like one under surveillance.

Whatever she did or said, there was 'one whose attention seemed always alive.

It was the most fidgetty, disagreeable, feeling in the world—and yet here, too, she could find nothing of which openly to complain.

Mrs Craven had assumed as we have seen, and she managed to retain, the privilege of attending to pour out the tea evening and morning. In the evening her presence might be endured—but the sociable breakfast meal, to be thus robbed of its comfort, was intolerable.

Emma felt it so to the full degree, and at last her high spirit was aroused. She felt ashamed of submitting passively to this disagreeable encroachment.

One day she came down a little earlier than usual, and entered the breakfast-room before William, who was a very early riser, and usually out in his grounds hours before she was dressed, had come in.

This was a rare occurrence. She usually, when she opened the breakfast-room door, found her husband and this odious housekeeper chatting amicably together, and every time she did so there was a disagreeable feeling upon her own part.

However, this day Mrs Craven was in the room alone. She was standing, as usual, at the upper end of the breakfast-table. She had just put in the tea, and arranged a few little matters among the fruit and flowers to her satisfaction, being very scrupulous and exact in such matters—and she now stood with the open newspaper in her hand, sometimes reading, and sometimes casting a glance at the different tables to see that all was as she pleased it to be.

She was a formidable woman. Emma could never help feeling rather afraid of her. There is that about these strong, determined, cold, and reserved characters, that exercises over an open, generous, and unguarded temper, a power little short of the fascination of the serpent's eye.

But Emma had courage and spirit, and she was resolved not to be daunted.

“That will do—that will do—thank you, Mrs Craven,” she began.

Alice looked up, made a slight reverence, and then, lifting up the lid of the tea-pot, looked in as if examining whether it were full enough. She did not seem to think that it was. She turned the cock of the silver tea-urn, and let more water in.

“That will do—that will do, thank you, Mrs Craven.” repeated Emma rather emphatically—“You will spoil the tea, I fear—my husband hates weak tea ; he likes it double strong.”

“I have been used, pretty well, to know what he does like”—murmured Mrs Craven half aside ; and without condescending to stop the stream of water that was flowing from the urn.

Upon which Emma stepped forward and turned it off herself ; and then, summoning up all her courage, with her cheek a little flushed, and her nerves tingling, but bravely determined to persevere, she went on,—

“And really, Mrs Craven, to tell the truth, I do not see the least necessity for your giving yourself this trouble every morning

and evening—I can make tea, I assure you—ignorant of many domestic matters as I may be. I always made tea at home, and I like to do it.”

“But there are other likes to be considered in this house, I suppose,” was the half insolent reply.

“Don’t speak to me in that tone, Mrs Craven—You take too much upon yourself.”

“I do, do I? Well—well—well—this is what I ought to have all along expected.”

“Ought to have expected,” cried Emma, getting excessively provoked, and as provoked people do, losing in consequence something of her dignity—“What *can* the woman mean—I should be glad to know what you did expect? . . . That you should be mistress in this house perhaps, not I?”

“I expected,” answered Mrs Craven, looking up undaunted, “that there should be a master over both of us.”

“And so there is.”

“And a pretty submission to his wishes some of us show.”

“This is intolerable,” cried Emma, passionately, “I will not be treated in this manner

by my own servant—Leave the room instantly, when I bid you.”

The proud menial immediately obeyed. She retired with the apparent consciousness of having been victorious ; and, if to have inflicted much more vexation than is received be a victory, most certainly she had triumphed.

Emma remained standing where she was, her cheeks quite in a blaze. Angry with herself, provoked at her awkward way, conscious that she had somehow or other managed the attack ill—that somehow or other she had been worsted—She felt almost as if she hated Mrs Craven.

“ This thralldom is insupportable,” she cried as her husband just then entered the room—
“ Mr Aubrey, that woman—nurse and favourite though she be—is the most intolerable creature I ever met with in my life.”

“ As how, my dearest Emma ?—She always appears to me to be respect and observance itself. What fault have you to find with her ? I am sure, if she is wanting in anything which is due to you, I have only to mention it, and it will be corrected.”

“It is astonishing to me that you can endure it.”

“Endure what?—What is there to endure?—What is the matter, Emma, this morning—why is Alice not here to pour out the tea?”

“Because I sent her away—I like to pour out the tea myself.”

“I am sorry you did that,” he said gravely, —“I am afraid she will think it unkind. It is a little privilege she seems to set much store by, a harmless one enough as it appears to me, if it gives her pleasure.”

“I cannot endure it—I cannot endure her prying eyes—they seem fixed upon one like the eyes of a basilisk—of a ghoul—of some horrid, witching thing—at least when she turns them upon me!—she worships you.”

“I believe, poor woman, she does love me well. Be reasonable, and be indulgent, Emma—Alice and I have loved each other so long! When my heart was almost breaking—before I was happy as I am now, she was everything to me.”

“So, it would seem, she is still,” said Emma with some petulance, for her heart was

swelling. It was the first time he had ever assumed this tone with her; and for such a cause, too! The cause of one that she felt to be her enemy, who offended her and vexed her in the most irritating manner, for what on earth is so irritating as an insolent dependant. She expected to have found, when once she condescended to complain, that her part would be taken up with a high hand by her husband. She expected to be protected from this, as from every evil, by one who, himself, indulged her in everything—the present tone was quite new—it was as mortifying as it was unexpected—peculiarly mortifying, as she attributed it to the influence of Alice, so she felt excessively offended and angry. She was, as you know, sweet tempered; but she was undisciplined. She was seldom out of temper, but when she was vexed she was accustomed to show it.

“How can you speak in this manner, Emma. ‘Everything to me still.’—Something to me she is, and, so help me God, ever shall be,” he added fervently; then with gravity and authority, he went on—“How I have loved you!—how I love you! You know

—You have my all—you are my all—everything that I possess is yours—there is not a wish of yours that I would not almost die to gratify, and this you know . . . I said all, I repeat it, you are my all, with one—one exception—one little portion of my heart—one little fragment of affection I have reserved for her, to whom I am everything, and who has done everything for me. This little offering to gratitude for benefits incalculable, I make, and you are jealous of it! Emma, is that like you?—You ought to despise me if I were capable . . . if my wild passion for yourself could make me forget her claims—and make the sacrifice of her happiness an offering—where everything else has been willingly sacrificed upon the altar of my idol. Emma, if I could do this, you ought to despise me as I should despise myself.”

“Idol!—altar!—sacrifice!”—she said, half angrily, half mournfully,—“that is beginning to be over, I see”—then she added—“take care, William, what you are about—perhaps, as certain mothers of old, passed what they loved best—their children through the fire, to propitiate their false god

Moloch—you are about to sacrifice me, [at the shrine of that ill woman.”

“Emma!—Will nothing make you reasonable?”

“I *am* reasonable—I wish I were unreasonable”—she said, bursting into tears—“Oh, how glad I should be to believe I was unreasonable—that you were right and I was wrong.”

“And am I not right?” coming up to her, throwing his arms round her, pressing her to his bosom, and kissing off her tears as they fell—“can I be anything else but right—but heroic when I contradict thee?”

This was not winning her cause, though.

She was soothed for the moment—how could she help it after such words—but she felt that the battle had to be fought over again. She had not gained a single step.

The next morning Mrs Craven quietly appeared at her usual place at the breakfast table, and Emma felt that she detested her presence, and herself too, more than ever.

She had only added the mortification of conscious defeat to her other causes of antipathy.

In everything else ; upon every other subject ; William Aubrey was only too ready to

gratify her; he seemed only to live to indulge and please her; but upon this one he was immoveable.

It was as the chamber of Bluebeard, and when such a chamber exists, adieu to happiness—that one unexplained secret poisons all.

She could not even speak out upon the subject; it soon became a sealed matter between them. Whenever she attempted to approach it, he looked so gravely hurt, and took so displeased a tone—the tone of one who thinks himself indisputably in the right, and his opponent as indisputably in the wrong, and very much in the wrong—that she soon gave up alluding to it.

The theme became as a forbidden one, whilst the pain and mortification attending it,—the sense of being injured in the tenderest part—sacrificed to an insolent servant—became the more acute for being driven inwards. She had no one to whom she could confide it, for what friend had she to consult or advise with. Her heart became cankered within—it was like the canker within a rose; when every leaf becomes by slow degrees discoloured and decayed.

His very love, his devotion to her happiness—his anxiety to forestal her every wish—these sweet things that are the perfume of a woman's life, quite lost their savour.

That one forbidden chamber! What was all the rest but vain and empty pretext, that one being withheld.

And then the pain was to be endured, the sore to be irritated every day, and twice every day.

Mrs Craven persisted in her claim to come in and make tea only the more because Lady Emma had ventured to resist it, and therefore to do it was to triumph.

William Aubrey continued to allow her the privilege, because he regarded it as a very harmless indulgence, on which Alice had set her heart, and that the opposition on the part of Emma was whimsical and unreasonable. He could understand and sympathise with Alice's wish to be allowed to do that for him which she had so long done, and which brought her for a short time every day in contact with him, now they were so much separated by his marriage—a separation which he knew Alice felt so painfully; all this he could under-

stand well. But Emma's desire to have him to herself at these particular moments—she who could have him to herself every hour of the day, and who often did not appear to value the privilege in any very high degree, appeared to him both captious and unkind; and he thought he detected in it a desire to exercise her power over him—whilst, conscious of his own weakness—internally sensible of the extreme pain it gave him to contradict his idol in the least thing, he looked upon himself as a martyr to gratitude for old obligations, and was the more obstinate because he found obstinacy so difficult.

Obstinacy is the resource of the weak—the rampart behind which those who know themselves to be weak take refuge.

To Emma the manner assumed by Alice upon these occasions was worst of all, her obsequiousness, her assumed respect and humility, irritated her like the most cutting irony.

She was not aware that William had made respect to herself the indispensable condition to Alice of retaining the privilege upon which she had so set her heart. He was eminently

just, and supported the claims of his wife to observance, with as much and more determination than that which he had used in maintaining the tie of old affections unbroken.

Hence arose a fresh cause of misapprehension.

His orders were obeyed—obeyed, as it appeared to him, with the studious desire to conform to his wishes.

It was only a little too studious, he admitted; but who can be graceful and at ease under the exaction of such things?

“Respect and observance should be spontaneous—they should be won, not demanded; and really, my sweet Emma,” he added, “when one looks at that smiling, cherub face of yours, and sees you fluttering about like a young bird, you must admit it is difficult for a stern, middle-aged woman like Alice to feel exactly reverential. I wish instead of being so jealous of respect, you were a little more greedy of being loved—you would win a fiend of darkness to love you.”

“I am sick of being loved if this be all”—she was going to say, but she stopped

the ungracious syllables, and was silent. She turned away, and tried to look satisfied. He loved her the better for not thinking her perfect, it brought her nearer to his level; but, alas! it was not so with her—every one of these conversations seemed to wither some little fibre of affection that was timidly winding itself into a place about her heart—to blight some little shoot of gratitude for his love. She was beginning to hold that love as little worth, which answered to her real wants and wishes so ill, and which, instead of protecting her from every injury, suffered her, as she thought, to be trampled on by a mere servant. Nothing alienates a woman's heart like this feeling. To be shielded from the oppression of others is her marriage right and claim—her indisputable claim—and never did the Lady Emma receive a slight from Alice, smoothed over as it might be by this outward pretence of respect, but she hated her the more, and loved her husband the less.

And so things went on for some time, getting worse from day to day, and if Emma hated Alice, Alice repaid the sentiment with interest. Alice was a thorough hater, whereas

Emma was but half a one. The foster-mother indulged the feeling to the full, and in the indulgence of it managed by degrees to make herself and all of them very miserable.

CHAPTER VII.

At church with sweet and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place ;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray.

AND now we must pass over a few years, for it would be tedious to follow in detail the progress of a life like this. Not but that it might afford as good, if not a better lesson upon the subject of the human heart than any other portion of this story.

The happiness of domestic life is made up of small details, and it would be no useless task, perhaps, to show, how, by inattention to such small things—or, to speak more accurately, from want of that true principle and guidance which, if once established, are certain to give a right direction to all affection—confidence, peace, and love

gradually decayed away in this fated mansion.

Poor Emma! —Leaning upon her own strength—her moral principles undeveloped, her conscience unenlightened, her ideas of duty obscure and confused—how was she to get along.

That true light, which when once thoroughly seen and obeyed has proved the safe guide of many a simple and ignorant heart—the care of that good Shepherd, who leadeth his lambs to fresh pastures, and to living waters springing up to everlasting life—she had heard of, as who has not, but she had not *found*.

Her husband, enlightened and instructed as he was justly esteemed to be in most things, in these was deplorably ignorant. He knew nothing of that spiritual vigour, that life of the soul which is the true strength, without which this earthly life is but a maimed, blighted, incomplete thing. Ignorant of which, with all the pride of science, we are little better off than the beasts that perish. In all these things, this accomplished man was as inexperienced as the merest savage.

She knew little of that better way—he, nothing.

William Aubrey could do nothing for her here, alas!

She was not perhaps positively unhappy, for he continued to be a most indulgent husband, she had not a wish that it was not his study to fulfil, and she was surrounded with all that could gratify fancy, or minister to pride.

There were those diamonds for instance, which he presented her with soon after their marriage, upon his return from a visit to London.

She was about to appear at the Assize Ball, which in the county where they lived was a grand affair; a sort of county re-union, and these diamonds were the finest in the room. I believe she felt girlishly pleased with, and proud at the sort of dignity the splendid jewels conferred—as well as in the wearing the numberless other costly and beautiful things, with which he was perpetually adorning her.

I have sometimes thought, that in the vacancy of her heart she strove to take an in-

terest in matters which, had her affections been properly filled, would never have occupied a thought.

These attentions upon the part of her husband kept up, to a certain degree, the old feelings of gratitude, but time accustomed her to them, and they excited less and less of interest every day—and time also—as in such cases it is certain to do by degrees, took something from the husband-lover's exclusive devotion.

He was like other men forced to give his attention to other things, all which is wholesome and right—but there his position was a false one, and she mistook him again here; she thought he cared less for her because he was necessarily less occupied about her—but she was mistaken, he cared for nothing upon earth but herself.

Sometimes she even fancied that he loved Alice most, but here again she misunderstood him. In the consciousness of his own weakness, he was jealous of himself; and it was because he felt but too indifferent to his foster mother, in comparison with his wife, that he persisted obstinately in the course he

had prescribed to himself. Upon this subject Emma still found herself powerless. She could not get Alice out of the house, nor shake off the sort of authority which she continued to exercise there.

And so things remained in much the same state, and we find her occupying the same housekeeper's room—and there has little change taken place in these years, except that Emma is the mother of a little girl, now about six years old.

There was a church at no great distance from the house, though standing in a different parish, to which the family sometimes went because Mr Aubrey had property, and consequently a pew there.

And so it happened upon one Sunday at the end of summer, that Lady Emma and her little daughter went to this church, (to which we will give the name of Collville,) because a new clergyman had lately arrived there, whom she had a curiosity to hear preach.

This clergyman had but very lately been

inducted into the living, which was a small one, and Emma had a great wish to hear him, he having brought with him the reputation of being a most eloquent preacher, and a very good and clever man—though poor—and upon that account under the necessity of adding to his means, by keeping a small, select school.

A preparatory school it was, but an expensive one, possessing so excellent a reputation, that it was eagerly sought for, and every vacancy immediately filled, people writing down their boys' names, it was said, even whilst they were in their nurses' arms; so great an advantage it was esteemed to have been prepared for a public school there.

The Lady Emma Aubrey and her little girl accordingly were seen hand-in-hand walking up the aisle to the great pew, which belonged to the property; and which took up a great deal more space than it ought to have done, in short about one fifth of that little church. It was not, however, walled in upon all sides by panels and crimson curtains, as such pews generally are, so as to separate, as far as it is possible, the great man from the small one, in an assembly where all stand before

that God, who is no respecter of persons—and the side of the pew towards the congregation was low, so that those who were within commanded a view of the assembly.

Lady Emma was accustomed to look about her a good deal at church. She seemed to think *going* to church was the grand object, and when that duty was performed, that she was at liberty to get through the time as well as she could; repeating her responses most audibly, yet missing nothing that was going on about her—more especially before service^s began, was she in the habit of amusing herself in this way.

So she sat looking down the aisle; and presently, she saw a slender, delicate young lady, very plainly dressed, come in, holding a little boy of about four years old by the hand, and followed by some half dozen more young gentlemen of ages reaching from five to eight.

This was evidently Mr Birchell's school—and the young lady . . . could it be possible? she thought. Could so sweet looking and elegant a creature really and in truth be the schoolmaster's wife?

The pew this lady and her little party were

to occupy, was just before Lady Emma's, and in that ill-arranged tumble down old church, was so placed as to face the Squire's pew, so that as the occupants of each sat, they could with difficulty help staring at each other.

The little boys were arranged in order by the help of a little whispering, and last of all the sweet looking young lady seated herself in her place, with the little one who seemed to be her peculiar charge close by her side.

The young clergyman began his discourse and preached extremely well. Usually there are two conditions wanting to make the sermon which concludes our church service as effectual as it ought to be, namely—good preachers, and good listeners. Mr Birchell fulfilled one of these conditions excellently well ;—I wish I could say as much for Lady Emma, as regarded the other.

She had not been very fortunate, it must be confessed, in those it had been her fate to sit under, as the phrase is, since she came to

England. The two churches she had frequented had been equally ill-served.

The one, by an ancient clergyman of the old, indifferent school, who went through his task, as if it were merely a task, repeating the sentences apparently as much by rote, as an ordinary schoolboy, or an extraordinary parrot. The other was, indeed, a younger man, but he belonged to a class now happily altogether passed away; he was given to good dinners, and rural sports—and at last had fallen a victim to an inefficient horse in a fox chase. The rails at which he rode had proved too much for the powers of his steed,—the horse had fallen back, and rolling over and upon his rider, had killed him upon the spot. It was to this gentleman that Mr Birchell had just succeeded.

In consequence, therefore, of the character of the two gentlemen severally appointed to watch over the immortal souls belonging to two parishes abounding with people—the sermons usually read from their respective pulpits were as dull, ineffective, and commonplace, as any it has ever been your chance to listen to; and Emma who was too clever

herself to receive such things under the name of instruction, soon contracted the evil habit of not troubling herself to attend at all, but of allowing her thoughts to wander in any other direction, just as fancy or association led them :—returning home neither better nor worse for the preaching, except in as much as her fatal habit of indifference was thereby in some degree strengthened.

As a consequence of which habit, so soon as Mr Birchell had delivered his text, she settled herself comfortably in the corner of her pew, and indulged her usual habit of wandering thought, or of watching the congregation, and speculating thereon—in short, letting her vagrant fancy take any direction it chose, carrying her far away from the discourse of which she actually heard nothing, until she was awakened from her reverie by a pause,—and found the sermon had ended.

Had she but listened to half a dozen sentences, in spite of her usual bad habits I think her attention must have been arrested.

An address more tender, persuasive, touching—more full of clear reasoning, and strong

internal religious persuasion, upon the part of the preacher—has seldom been heard, and can never in my opinion be surpassed, in any congregation.

It was the opening of the young man's ministry, and consequently this particular discourse was above the average, high as that average was.

Lady Emma, however, as I have said, heard not one syllable of it—for, added to her usual carelessness, there was upon this occasion a new subject of curiosity and interest placed exactly before her, to which so soon as she was seated after the last devotions, she, without scruple, gave her undivided attention.

And this was, the very interesting looking young lady, and her set of little boys, but most of all, that charming cherub who was nestling close by her side.

Lady Emma at once concluded, that the other little fellows, who showed by the strong contrasts and marked differences in their faces and complexions, that they could not belong to one family, were the pupils, and that

the heavenly looking little creature, so closely cherished, was this charming looking young lady's own child.

That she was Mrs Birchell herself, she felt sure.

Lady Emma gave a cursory glance over the promising looking little set ; so orderly, so neatly dressed, so quiet and good in their behaviour ; and yet, whose bright complexions, rosy cheeks, and sparkling animated eyes, gave assurance, that it was not to a want of wholesome joyous children's spirits, that they were in church thus demure and *rangé*.

She could not help mentally contrasting them with her own little brothers at the same age—now great boys at public schools or colleges—and she at once decided that they must be a very well managed, as well as a happy little set, in short the nicest she had ever seen. So she again looked at the pale, delicate face of the young lady, speculating how much she had to do in producing such laudable results.

And every time she looked at that face she felt inclined to love it—to love it better and

better—yearning to it with that sort of instinctive sympathy which is the earnest that we are about to find a friend. Alas, how much the envied Emma wanted such a friend ! Her thoughts had not, however, extended at present so far ; but she resolved to call upon Mrs Birchell the next day and begin an acquaintance with her.

From the young lady her eyes had travelled to the child, whom she concluded was her own little boy ; and soon they were fixed, as if fascinated.

She thought that in her life she had never beheld such a model of infantine beauty.

His face was round and chubby, as a child's should be ; but it was the very picture of innocence, intelligence, and infant love and joy. The beautiful flaxen curls of hair fell like a shower of spun silk over his face as he shook his little head, or raised it to look up at her who sat at his side ; or dropped it to spell over his testament and prayer-book at the places she carefully pointed out to him.

Lady Emma observed that whether they sat, or stood, or kneeled, it was hand-in-

hand; unless when the lady for a moment withdrew her's, to turn a leaf or point out a place in a book; when, as soon as this was done his little dimpled fingers would steal between her's again.

He was so good, too, during the sermon, the little darling!

Keeping himself quite still—occasionally lifting up those large, resplendent blue eyes of his to the preacher; at times letting them trot a little round the church, but all in a very sober and demure manner.

Emma thought she had never seen anything so pretty in her life.

She could not take her eyes from the child. She felt fascinated, as one sometimes is by a face, one knows not why—whether of child, woman, or man. The eyes are withdrawn in vain—they return against the will, to gaze and watch the changes of that countenance which to us possesses such inexplicable charm.

And so she turned her eyes another way and strove to look at other things—in vain—they returned as if impelled by some invisible

attraction—like the needle to the pole; it is an old but just illustration.

At length, as she gazed and watched, something more than this feeling of charmed admiration began to steal over her. The little face seemed to excite a peculiar interest of its own;—recollections, associations, or times past by, began, one after the other, to be awakened.

Yes, there was no doubt of it—there *was* a likeness—a strange likeness. Such as are accidentally met with in engravings, and sometimes in real life, resemblances between individuals who cannot by possibility have the slightest connection with each other. —More striking, perhaps, than those to be observed even in the closest family relations. —How singular!—And that this little child should just chance to sit with his sweet mother exactly under her eye!—What was it that in this almost infant countenance recalled so strangely the image of the full grown man.

She had never seen that man as a child, but just such a child she felt certain he must have been.—The little darling!—She longed

to have him in her arms—she longed to have him on her knee—to kiss him, to caress him, to press him to her heart, to talk to him, to have those beautiful infant eyes—the most pure and glorious of all eyes, lifted up to her's—with that innocent intelligence, and wonder written there—which were so inexpressibly lovely.

The longer she looked, the stronger the resemblance grew.

Poor, ill-fated, Edward!—Yes, just such a child he must have been. No wonder his parents adored him.

So he must once have looked. And was it possible?—Could it be?—Must that face too, worthy to belong to one of those cherubs leaning from the clouds which bear the Highest of Heaven—must that sweet purity and innocence before her be gradually exchanged for the countenance of an erring, guilty man!—Had Edward looked and promised so, to forfeit honour and happiness at a gaming table—and sink at last, a wretched suicide, into the devouring ocean!

Sad but useful thoughts succeeded to these.

Thoughts than which none more serious could have been entertained, even had she listened to Mr Birchell's sermon.

Mournful reflections upon the changing futility of earthly things; longings after a something more solid, and purer—accompanied by those intense yearnings of the heart after the dead which are in themselves purifying, for they are of the spirit, and make the heart better.

The memory of Edward, as she had last seen him, in all that manly pride of beauty and intelligence, rushed upon her. She seemed again under the influence of the eye which could blaze or melt—dazzle, or beam with unutterable sweetness and tenderness. Again she beheld that sweet, feeling, yet joyous mouth and smile, the air and manner, the voice, the look.—All rushed upon her with a sudden, unexpected force.

She thought she had taught herself to forget him !

But at this little picture before her remembrance gushed up.—To look at that child was enough.—How came it that a little child could be so like a grown man?

Thus were Emma's thoughts busied during Mr Birchell's sermon; whilst her own little girl, a very well-behaved good little thing, sat, not nestling close to her mother as Mrs Birchell's boy did, but at a proper distance, erect and serious, amusing herself with counting, first, how many bonnets with pink ribbons there were in the congregation, next how many with blue, next how many with green, and so on—for she had an active young intellect of her own, and it must be doing something.

I wish, by the way, it were the custom to send children of that age out of church before the sermon begins.

The sermon, however, has at last ended; people rise up and prepare to leave the church, and the aisles begin to be thronged.

That a general sensation had been produced was evident. People looked in general exceedingly content and well pleased—and somewhat raised in their own opinion too. It was plain they had got a very superior and clever man for their minister, and everyone seemed to esteem themselves somewhat higher upon that account.

Lady Emma, who was a keen observer, smiled a little to herself as she perceived this; and watched the stream as it passed by the pew in which she waited, with some amusement.

Mrs Birchell, like herself, remained to let the torrent flow away, before she quitted her pew; at last she came out, followed by her troop of little boys. She walked down the aisle, just before Lady Emma—sending her little flock in advance, and following, still holding her own peculiar little boy by the hand.

The two young ladies found themselves standing side by side at the church door. Emma to-day holding her own little girl's hand in her's—not a usual practice between them, but as it were adopted almost intuitively in imitation of Mrs Birchell and her little boy.

They waited upon the steps a few moments whilst the crowd around them was clearing away.

Emma looked wistfully at Mrs Birchell, wishing excessively to speak to her, but not exactly knowing how to begin; for she was

far from presuming upon her position as Squiress, or supposing that this superiority gave her a right to dispense with the common rules of etiquette, or render her acquaintance of course acceptable. So she kept hesitating whether to speak or not—but the temptation at last proved too strong for her; recollecting also that she was going to call the next day, she took courage and ventured to open the conversation by saying,

“What a nice set of little boys you have here.—This pretty one is your own, I suppose.”

The young lady made no answer to the last part of the sentence, except by a gentle pressure of the little hand she held, a slight rise in the colour upon her cheek, and a drawing of the little one somewhat closer to her—to the first portion of the address, her reply was—

“They are a dear, good set of little fellows.”

And the voice was so excessively pleasant, that it completed the captivation of the lady of the manor.

"I am Lady Emma Aubrey," she went on, "perhaps you already know me by name. We don't live very far from this. I intended to-morrow to have the pleasure of calling upon you. I hope you will excuse me taking the liberty to break through ordinary rules, and yielding to the temptation of beginning an acquaintance now, directly."

Mrs Birchell upon this looked up, and showed by her face that she was almost as much inclined to be captivated upon her side. Her smile was full of pleasure as she answered—

"I am sure, I am very much obliged to you, and as you are so kind as to intend me the honour of a visit, perhaps you will like to make it now.—The vicarage is close by—it will save you a pretty long drive—luncheon, or rather dinner, is upon the table—for we dine between services together with our little flock. . . . I scarcely can venture to ask you and your little girl to join us, but I can assure you ours are very well-behaved little boys."

"I should like it excessively," responded

the ardent-tempered Emma, with great cordiality, "and so, I am sure, would my little girl—would not you, Emmeline."

"Very much, dear mama," answered the small lady, with her little, proper, discreet tone and manner.

"Come along then," said Emma.

Her carriage was just then drawing up. Such an elegantly appointed equipage as it was! such fine horses! such tall footmen! such liveries, and canes, and powdered heads!

"Mrs Birchell, however, seemed not in the least dazzled or disconcerted by these indications of wealth and grandeur.—She simply said,

"There is a very good and respectable little hostelry just below, where perhaps your servants and horses will put up. I am sorry that I cannot extend my invitation to them, but I have such a miniature of a kitchen that I doubt whether your ladyship's footmen could even stand upright in it, and as for stable we have literally none—ours having been converted into a play-room."

Lady Emma gave her orders, saying she should stay till afternoon church was over—"If I may," she added, correcting herself, and turning to Mrs Birchell.

"It will give me great pleasure, for between services I am quite at leisure—The little boys are allowed to play about all the time—we are afraid of their being tired of being good if we give them much teaching upon a Sunday.

"We!—you!—Do you teach them yourself—*you* teach school!"

"I do my best," she said quietly.—"I am not a very experienced scholastic; but one can only do one's best—and one improves. I have taken infinite pains to master those abominable Latin quantities; and I believe I have succeeded. I was so afraid of falsifying the ear if I was not very careful in this indispensable accomplishment . . . a boy may have all his prospects in life blighted, you know, if he prove deficient in longs and shorts."

"Latin! Do you teach Latin?" repeated Lady Emma, greatly interested. She remembered her own imperfect attempts at home, and she added, "But do you not

find teaching very wearisome and irritating. I thought a gentleman always taught in a boy's school."

"Not always—ladies are sometimes entrusted with the young idea, at least until a certain age. Mr Birchell has the care of his parish upon his hands, and that, of all things, must not be neglected."

"But does he not teach at all?"

"Oh yes, he gives every moment he can conscientiously spare to the little boys—and of great value all he can do is—but I grind at the wheel—the wheel, no doubt, your experience in these things has taught you, must be kept going. This is indispensable in all attempts at education—a more ordinary intellect, with good will, is all that is absolutely needed for that—I feel myself quite equal to grinding—but without Mr Birchell's own lessons I should be afraid there would be little satisfaction."

"But how tired you must be of the same wearisome routine, day after day—day after day. I am sure in old times not one of the children sickened at the sight of the French grammar so much as I did. How can you

bring yourself to bear it?—Unless, indeed, you were ‘to the manner born’—which I can scarcely believe. Have you been long turning at this grindstone you speak of?”

“Not very long.”

“How impertinent you must think me—pray excuse me—I was formerly nothing but a wild Irish girl, and now I am little less than a savage—I left a remote castle in Ireland to inhabit the wild hills of this secluded part of the country. We rarely go to London. I have seen nothing of the world—had only one regular season in my life. So pray excuse me for being so forward, and unlike other people as I fear I am It makes me so happy to have met with a companion of my own age.”

“You are very good. It is a great pleasure upon my side. I am only afraid when you know me better that you will not like me so well as you expect—for I am grown but a stupid person—all my energy seems expended upon my daily labour—and when work is over, I am usually so exhausted that I am more like an idiot than anything else.”

“ Then you have not been engaged in this work very long ? ”

“ Not very long—about two years and a half only—we have but lately returned to England.”

“ You have been living abroad, then—how I do envy you—I so wish to go abroad. Have you been in Italy? Beautiful Italy!—Seen Rome, Naples, Florence—Oh ! how I *do* envy you ! ”

“ No—I have not seen any of those famous places—I long for such a privilege almost as much as Lady Emma can do—but I have seen wonders. I have been living in Egypt.”

Emma uttered a little shriek of surprise and joy.

“ You don’t say so ! ”—In Egypt!—How delightful!—Is it not very grand, very wonderful!—The pyramids—the temples.—. . ”

“ Very solemn and very grand, indeed, it is—Such a hoary, venerable, antiquity seems to surround you. It realises to the heart those solemn ages of the world, when man seems to have been quite a different being from what he is now—when he was no vain, trivial creature, fretting his hour upon the

stage—but a serious and noble being, feeling that he lived before the eyes, and in actual communion, with the Most High God.—

“When” she continued, “you look round upon those objects of which you speak, you seem to be restored to those grand, simple old days—that patriarchal life as described in the Bible—when the wayfarer rested his head upon a pillow of stone—but angels descended in his vision—when the lamp and the burning fire passed between the sacrifices of Abraham—and the Lord, the Lord God, spoke to him, as a man speaketh with his friend.”

“It must be very grand,” said Emma—struck with the way in which Mrs Birchell spoke—“And yet,” she continued, “I think I should like Italy better.”

“I do not think that I quite agree with you,” Mrs Birchell replied—“but here we are arrived at our ‘humble abode,’ as Mr Collins has it, and I will not promise that my husband may not feel as much elated by this honour from your Ladyship, as Mr Collins himself could be when the Lady Catherine, in her pony chaise, condescended to drive past his door.”

Emma laughed—She understood this allusion better than she had done the other. In one respect, at least, her education had not been neglected—She had devoured and re-devoured the novels of Miss Austin.

‘The wicket opening with a latch received the humble pair.’

The little garden-gate literally opened so, and the tiny vicarage covered over with all sorts of rambling creeping plants, presented itself—the casement windows peeping out between the branches, like eyes under clustering hair.

“Run forward, Percy, and open the door,” said the young hostess; and forward, obedient and proud to obey, rushed the little smiling boy she addressed. He was followed by his school-fellows, who, having once entered their own domain, seemed to give a loose to their spirits, and began to rush about and shout and cry aloud, and indulge that first passion of children—the making a noise.

“Silence—silence!” cried the young lady, scarcely able to help laughing—“What a little rabble rout you are?—You must understand, dears, that you may play about and

make as much noise as you will after passing the wicket, except when your Missis has company—You must not disturb and incommode company—Go quietly through the house, and play in the back garden till I call you in to dinner, that's my good boys."

The children obeyed her voice, and were stilled at once as if by the voice of an enchanter!

"Will not you go and play, too, dear?" said the lady to her little companion, who still held fast hold of her hand.

"No, mama, I'll stay with you and this little girl, if I may, may I?"

"Yes, my darling, if you will."

"This *is* your little boy, then"—said Emma, struck more than ever with the strange likeness as the child looked up.

The lady again made no answer to the remark, and they entered the little mansion.

What a contrast it was to Lady Emma's lordly palace, and yet, in its way, it was quite as poetic and pleasing—quite as far removed from the vulgar common-place of life.

Taste, refinement, a love of order and

beauty, seemed to have presided over every arrangement of the sweet little place. The *genius loci* was, indeed, of no common kind—a hermitage, with its crystal well and hanging foliage of trees, may be as striking to the imagination as the loftiest and most gorgeous cathedral. The objects are different, the feelings they inspire may be as spiritual and imaginative.

Emma was as much charmed with the little parsonage as with the parson's wife herself.

CHAPTER VIII.

Dans cette âme ou étaient agenouillés les saints repentirs, il se dressa un heroique orgueil.

THIS little incident was the opening of an entirely new chapter in Emma's life.

A rapid friendship sprang up between her and Mrs Birchell.

It was the first time since her separation from her Mary, who has been before mentioned in this story, and from whom circumstances too long to relate had speedily separated her, that she had felt the pleasure of possessing a friend of her own sex.

In the retirement in which her days were spent she had little opportunity for choice, and there did not happen to be any one in the neighbourhood with whom she could associate with particular pleasure. Emma was

difficult, not through pride, for that was not one of her faults, but through a certain superiority of genius and delicacy of moral perception, which rendered her hard to please. She had not yet learned to love people in spite of their faults; like most of her years she waited to love till she could find a faultless image to adore, and she had waited long. But she thought—and she was not very far from the truth—that she had found something very near to perfection here.

She grew fonder of Grace Birchell every day, and soon spent half her time at the vicarage.

The Birchells were both of them accomplished people—Grace more particularly so. Her father had held an eminent diplomatic situation, Grace had been bred in courts, and her manners had received an exquisite polish—that flower of politeness which, when united with simplicity of heart, is the most pure and beautiful of charms.

She had travelled much, for a life so short as her's, and seen a wonderful variety of places, people, and things—the last of her sojourns had been in Egypt, and there she

had become acquainted with her present husband.

At that time Mary occupied a most brilliant position, as the only child of a man in high political relations, and apparently of large private fortune; and it was whilst thus elevated in rank that she had chosen Henry Birchell from among a crowd of admirers.

Her father sighed; but he saw that her heart was deeply engaged; he appreciated the merit of the young man—he hoped to have the opportunity of pushing him forward in his profession, and in the meantime he offered a home at his own house, or rather palace, to the young people, and they were married.

About a year and a half after this event, and before her father, Sir Thomas Lever, had found an opportunity of securing the interests of his son-in-law, he died at Cairo, struck down by one of those fevers which terminate life in a few hours.

At his death—as happens at many a death—the whole unsubstantial fabric of his fortunes crumbled, like frost work, away. As in those edifices in Cuba, where the beams and timbers have been silently hollowed

by the white ant, suddenly, without the slightest warning given, when every beam in appearance is solid and secure, some slight accident happens to test its solidity, and the whole edifice gives way, and sinks into a heap of ruins.

Far from finding herself an heiress, when that terrible calling to account, consequent upon the death of the father of a family, took place—where that array of figures—that balance of debts and assets is drawn up, and the undeniable state of facts made apparent—Mary found her fortune worse than nothing, for her father had died considerably in debt.

What she and her husband were to do at this critical moment of their lives was a difficult question—the young man being at this trying moment deprived of all power of exertion by a tedious and dangerous illness. There were they, exposed to all the horrors of beggary and absolute want in a foreign land—the most terrible form of destitution! What they could have done it is impossible to say, had they not possessed a friend.

This friend was one of those Beys in the service of Mehemet Ali, of whom one has

heard so much. He was, as were most of the officers, though serving a Mahometan master, an European. What his position or name in his own land had been was an impenetrable secret. He gave not the slightest hint of what he was, or whence he came, even to his nearest and most intimate friends.

The previous history of many of these successful adventurers at Eastern courts will not bear very strict examination; but whatever might have been his former career, the present life of this gifted and extraordinary man was exemplary in the highest degree.

He was in the utmost favour with the ruthless and heartless tyrant whom he served; but that favour was exercised only for purposes of good. Omar Bey was indefatigable in promoting the great objects with the advance of which he was intrusted; but in the pursuit of these objects he never for a moment lost sight of the ends of benevolence, or suffered the laws of justice and righteous dealing, whenever he was concerned, to be infringed upon in the slightest degree.

Never man laboured more anxiously, more unremittingly, or more wisely and well. The

evils which even *he* found it impossible to remove were innumerable—the injustice and tyranny which he could not prevent, enormous—yet what he was able to effect of good by his persevering and well-directed endeavours was immense, too.

Omar Bey was the admiration of everybody who understood the state of Egyptian affairs at that time.

Relations of public business had brought him much into communication with Sir Thomas Lever, and he became at last extremely intimate in his family. He took a very great liking both to Grace and to her husband ; and when the hour of misfortune came, proved himself a fast and real friend.

Nothing could exceed the kindness he had shown them. And when the state of Mr Birchell's health at length imperatively obliged him to return to England, Omar Bey, though apparently keeping up no relations with his own country, had some way or other contrived, as it appeared, to interest certain travelling Englishmen upon the subject of Mr Birchell's affairs, and through them had obtained for his friend this small preferment,

which, united to the plan of taking a few little boys as pupils, would, at least, ensure bread.

Such was Grace Birchell's brief history, as gathered by Emma, from those little confidences and relations, which gradually take place between one friend and another.

Emma listened with admiration and astonishment.

"But how could you go through all this?—And how can you submit as you do to the existence you are now leading, after having been used to so much better things! It is the very last life in the world for which you were ever intended."

"We are intended for what happens to us," Grace would answer with a smile—"We find ourselves urged by a power too strong for us—launched in spite of ourselves in the path we are to follow. Don't think me a Mahometan fatalist, dear Lady Emma, much, doubtless, as regards our destiny, is in our own power—and yet every one I should think must own, that throughout life they have met with a something out of themselves—a something which says, 'thus far shalt thou go and

no farther'—a Providence, in short, 'that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will ;' and which, as the ruined French emigrant said, —'has roused one to be Emperor of the world, and one to be a poor school-master ; or, poor stocking-mender, as you please to have it.'

"I know you have a great heart," said Emma—"capable of everything . . . of every sacrifice to what you think right—but this keeping a school—a boy's school ! It is worse than the stocking mending—How can you bring yourselves to do it ? This preferment is a miserable affair, I know—Yet in the way you are contented to live, I should have thought it might have sufficed till something better turned up, without these odious school arrangements."

"No, my dear, it would not—for we want a certain sum of money for a certain purpose—I don't like teaching school, and I don't like mending stockings—but depend upon it, dear friend, there are few things which God sets us to do that he does not sweeten in the doing—so we cheerfully set to work at the appointed tasks."

"But how do you know it is the appointed

task?—It seems to me that we are left very much at liberty to choose our own tasks.”

“ Sometimes—not always. There are plain and obvious duties to be performed in many cases ; and when this happens, I look upon it just as if my Lord and Master set me the task visibly—as if he bade me labour for him, and showed the manner in which I was to labour—and will I not ? Will I not work cheerfully, gladly, proudly, in any corner of the great vineyard to which He appoints me.”

Her eyes glistened and her face glowed as she spoke, though her head was bent over the stocking she was literally darning. To Emma the face was like the face of an angel.

She said nothing, but kept looking at it for some time—then she sighed and said—

“ Why have I not known you before ?—”

“ Dear Lady Emma, we can teach each other so little !—but there is one who can teach us so much. Do not *imitate* me—we cannot imitate each other—dispositions are so different in this world—only follow the true path—the blessed path which leads to the

living fountain—and drink from it cheerful obedience and joy.”

“ Ah! I am so far from either—”

She answered, and sighed again.

Another day Emma began to talk about the little boy—

“ That charming child! He is not your own, I know—but he is like your own. You are excessively scrupulous and careful in your attentions to all the others, I can perceive—but this little one is nearer and dearer than the rest—Do tell me about him—who and what is he ?”

“ It is rather a cold, prudential maxim of mine”—answered Grace—“ never to tell, what one does not wish should be told again—I fancy that if one yields to that sort of impatience of keeping a secret, which seems to be the besetting sin of everybody, one has no right to expect that others will do by us, what we cannot do by ourselves But do you really care to know anything about the little fellow ?”

“ I take a strange interest in him—I could tell you why—but that is my secret”—and she sighed—but tried to catch up and hide the sigh. She had got into a sad trick of sighing. “ I wish so to know what and whose he is. Dear Grace, it is not idle curiosity—it seems essential to my peace to know. I cannot rest till I learn, where you met with this child. You may trust me—I am not a gossip—and besides who is there to gossip with? Only yourself.”

“ Nay, if you really wish it!—Yet how it can trouble you so I cannot guess—”

“ Don’t try to guess—but tell me where you found him, and who is his father?”

“ His father!—Omar Bey.”

Emma started from her chair; then sat down again and covered her face with her hand—her heart was beating so rapidly, that you almost heard it.

She remained in this attitude a considerable time.

At last she raised her head, passed her hand across her brow as if to dissipate some vision, and then said,

“ You did not tell me that Omar Bey was a married man—was he married?”

“ Yes, my dear,” said Grace with simplicity. “ Did I not tell you this was his little child. The mother was a beautiful creature; she died when the infant was but a few months old. In great distress he brought the child to me—for he was about to proceed to some distant place on matters connected with his administration. The poor young mother had no friends—I believe it was compassion for her unprotected state, which chiefly led this generous man to take her to wife—indeed, he never missed the opportunity of doing a generous or benevolent action. The good he effected whilst he was in Egypt, considering how unfavourable circumstances were—was enormous.”

“ But the young lady—Was she very beautiful?”

“ Excessively beautiful—but he seemed only to regard that, as it increased her moral dangers. She was very lovely, almost as lovely as yourself, sweet Lady Emma—indeed, at times I have fancied I saw a resem-

blance between you—but beautiful as she was he never seemed truly in love with her—he was everything that was protecting and kind, but no more—I don't know whether she perceived this innate coldness, poor thing, for he strove to hide it by every means in his power—I used to wonder at his indifference, she was so very fair.”

“ And—and—is the little boy like— . . . ”

“ Not in the least—but the very picture of his father—as like him as a baby boy can possibly be to a grown man.”

“ Ah me! Ah me!”

“ How pale!—Dear Lady Emma, what is the matter?—Surely, surely, you did not know anything of this good man; the best friend ever human creature had upon earth.”

“ Oh no, no! So what about the child.”

“ I was unmarried then—I was so glad to take the infant and rear it as if it were my own little brother, I felt, I loved it so dearly—and this was the great bond between us.

“ When, through his generous exertions, we were about to sail for England, he asked me to take the child with me, and not to let

it know who its father was, ‘Until you hear from me,’ he said. ‘I am about to leave this place—things are too strong for me. I cannot do as I wish—I cannot help forward the good; and so help me God, never, never again whilst I live, will I abet the cause of evil. So soon as you are gone I shall depart from these parts; but I am a restless, miserable wanderer upon the world—my earthly happiness wrecked for ever. Something I must be doing—the pursuing sorrow drives me on. I shall plunge into the wilds of this deserted Africa. It is a noble field—it calls out for labourers, and there is much to be done.’”

She stopped; but Emma only said,

“Go on.”

“We tried in vain to persuade him to abandon the idea. His heart was made for grand and perilous actions—the great cause of humanity was ever present there, and he pursued his objects with a fervour and enthusiasm that I never saw equalled in any other. It was evident also, that, he was not a happy man. Some cause he would never disclose, connected with his previous history, had left

him one of those shipwrecked beings who seem to have no country. We parted upon the pier at Alexandria—I shall never forget that parting, or his disentangling himself from the little boy, who clung to him desperately, and his placing him in my arms, and then turning away. I had a line or two of farewell afterwards, saying that he was just setting out for the states on the coast of South-Eastern Africa.”

“ Well—and what then ? ”

“ I have not heard of him since.”

CHAPTER IX.

. . . . Soon refreshed from Heaven,
He calms the throb and tempest of his heart.
His countenance settles ; a soft solemn bliss
Swims in his eye—his swimming eye upraised :
And Faith's whole armour glitters on his limbs !

COLERIDGE.

It was a desperate plunge.

Maddened by despair, he had sprung from the cliff, and there he was, buried in the raging deep. The waters roared and boiled over his head, and deafening noises were in his ears. He had intended to die ; there is no doubt of it—but as has happened with many a suicide—God knows with how many too late—even in the very grasp of death the love of life ; an ardent desire for life suddenly returned, and with it an appalling horror of death—of such a death !—thus rushing unbidden into the presence of his Judge and Creator ! His soul was filled with horror, and the most intense desire to live.

The waters after the first plunge had borne him up again; he rose to the surface, and once more beheld the face of heaven, and the light of the blessed sun.

There was a vessel at no great distance, which he caught sight of—her masts looming against the sky—and he struck out desperately, in hopes of reaching her, urged forward by this passionate desire for life which had come upon him.

His head is raised above the water—he signals to the vessel, and waves his hand, but it is only for a moment that he can do it, for he feels himself rapidly sinking. But the signal has been perceived, and already a boat is lowered to save him. One of the crew had remarked a something—he knew not what—some dark body falling over the snow-white face of the cliff; and he had watched in that direction until he became aware that a man was struggling with the waves, and striving, as it seemed, to make his way towards the vessel.

In consequence of this, a boat had been immediately let down; and soon he sees it

approaching, and through the booming waves hears indistinctly the loud cheering of the men.

His strength was by this time beginning to fail; but he made a desperate effort, and again he raised and waved his arm.

A few seconds more, and before he well knew how it was going with him, Edward found himself lying at the bottom of the boat, covered with a piece of sail-cloth. He was by this time speechless, and almost insensible.

They carried him up the side of the vessel, which was just spreading its sails, and laying him upon the deck, left him under the care of an old seaman, whilst the crew were busied among the rigging; for the wind was fair, and there was no time to be lost. The captain was impatient to be gone, and would not, or could not, tarry to ask questions of a half-drowned, speechless man. To every representation upon the subject of putting him on shore, his answer was, that they should speak plenty of vessels as they went down channel, and the man could be sent on board

any one of them, and so return home. For his part, he wasn't going to lose his time for a stupid land-lubber who did not know how to walk at the edge of a cliff, without tumbling head-foremost into the sea.

Edward was long in recovering his senses. When he was able to rise and stand upright, the land had already disappeared, and the vessel, with every sail set, was making her way at a dashing rate.

They gave him what assistance they could, lending him dry clothes and so on ; but his head was still confused and dizzy, and the greatest favour they could do him, he said, would be to let him be quiet a little and recover his senses, before he spoke to the captain. By his dress and manner, the crew, a rough one though it was, perceived they had to do with a gentleman, so they let him be ; and he, making his way over the deck, covered with various lumber, which the sailors were now busy clearing away and putting in order, went and sat down by himself close to the head of the little vessel.

There he remained stupidly sitting for some little time, his head buried in his hands—

his thoughts all in tumultuous confusion, like the waves from which he had been rescued. At last the brain began to settle, he felt more composed, and, as he believed, fell fast asleep. When he awakened from this slumber he felt quieted and restored to the full possession of himself.

How long he had remained in this state of insensibility he knew not ; but when he looked up, he perceived that the sun was sinking rapidly towards the west.

It was a heavenly evening—the sky overhead was of the fairest blue, without a cloud—the sun cast long lines of tinted light along the tops of the waves, which, with a lulling sound, gently heaved and broke against the sides of the vessel ; now making her way before the favourable wind that swelled her sails, and played refreshingly upon his temples as he turned his face and gazed upon the cheerful bustle, and listened to the voices of the men so busy upon the deck.

He had got quite out of their way ; nobody took any notice of him—he had plenty of time for reflection, and reflection came readily enough.

And first, the last cruel scene with his father—the suspected treachery of his brother, and the agonies of his despair, all were renewed with the most frightful vividness. The agitation of his mind became excessive—his frame shook with it. The cruel sense of injustice—the still more cruel sense of having been betrayed by him in whom he implicitly trusted—the recollection that there he sat, a ruined, disgraced, disinherited man—and that she he loved was lost to him for ever! . . .

It was too much.

His spirit swelled within him—rage and rebellion were in his heart, and he dared once more to lift a remonstrating, rebellious eye against that Great invisible Ruler, to whom we all in the hour of extremity instantaneously turn, realising the invincible strength of the power upon us and around us. Either in submission or defiance, we feel forced to turn to Him.

But this mood did not last long. His better angel spoke at length, and as Edward looked upwards to the calm, loving, all-including heavens above his head, or gazed upon the majestic sun, setting so peacefully in the

west, or listened to the lull of the waters, and the soft wind whispering among the sails, better thoughts began to arise.

Conscience made itself heard in its turn, that deep serious voice of conscience, calling us to account whether we will or no, and bringing us even in this life to the bar—in anticipation of that great judgment-hall where sentence must be pronounced by a voice holier still.

He began to ask himself what he had done to deserve a better fate—to be singled out from among other men for the almost unexampled prosperity he had enjoyed and thrown away—what had he done? and he now asked himself whether the reverse from which he was suffering, had not been well deserved as the natural consequence of his own actions?

Few of us can put such questions to ourselves and receive a satisfactory answer, and Edward Aubrey most certainly was not one of those few.

He could find little satisfaction in looking back upon his life.

It had been that of a brave, spirited, generous-hearted young man, it is true. He

had served his king and his country ; he had been the ornament of his profession ; he had been beloved and admired by every one—

But when he came to take account of his heart, and of what he had really achieved—looking upon his life in that newly-acquired sense of accountableness to a righteous, all-seeing Judge, which his near approach to death had awakened—the result was miserable indeed.

What had he done for others?—What had he done for his own soul?—What had he done for God ?

What sacrifices of inclination?—what genuine attempt at the advancement of good?—what real obedience to the Author of his being and the Giver of all good, had he paid ?

His life, to look back upon, was as one bright dream, in which his duty as a professional man appeared, indeed, consistently and satisfactorily performed—but that was all ; as regarded the rest—what a careless, undisciplined life, of thoughtless self-indulgence, it seemed to him now it had been. Even in its best aspect unprofitable—but when he looked back upon the last few months, and

considered how he had spent his time, the recollection was hateful to him.

He deserve a large inheritance!—*He* deserve to be a leader among men!—*He* deserve Emma!—He, who had spent the time in careless neglect of the best principles which bind society together—in defiance of what he knew to be his father's wishes; in short, in a manner which appeared to him now so thoroughly disgraceful!

As he looked at his present position from this point of view, and he did full justice upon himself—he felt that he had well merited what he endured, and more, and he was now able to take a temperate review of what his present situation really was.

In truth, the prospect was desolate enough.

He was a ruined, disinherited, disgraced man—without country, profession, or home.

To return to his profession a marked man—the mark rendered indelible by the seal of a father's curse, was impossible—to apply to the brother who had wronged him, even to meet the eye of that brother again, equally impossible—but to bear to see Lady Emma, now lost to him for ever—to incur

the slightest risk of meeting her again, more impossible than all.

He resolved to quit his country for ever.

The world was before him, what should he do ?

The world of England would look upon him as dead—dead as a miserable suicide, probably ; to that world he would remain dead—but there was One aboveall—and his blue eye was lifted to that sky whose heavenly sweetness it in a manner reflected—One long forgotten, little thought of—but now remembered—and there was mankind around him. God with all his righteousness, mercy, and truth, to be obeyed—and man, with all his misery and vice, to be served.

And as such thoughts took their turn, the true heart within Edward Aubrey revived again. That good, generous nature of his, which the world and prosperity were fast debasing, burst its trammels ; and he stood freed and himself, a new, fresh man—as if just issuing uncorrupted and undefiled from the hands of his great Creator.

I know many upon whom the shock of a

great misfortune has produced this regenerating, this blessed effect.

He would retire, then, from England, where his course had closed, where nothing was left for him to do, and he would go elsewhere.

He had visited many lands, he had seen the abject misery produced by blind misrule, and ignorance, and darkness ; he had often felt how much might be done, and his heart, in its better moments, had yearned to do it—and now he would set about, and he would do it.

He had once visited Egypt, at that time, groaning under the blind tyranny of Mehemet Ali. Mehemet Ali was nevertheless surrounded by Franks. He loved to employ them, he appreciated to their full value the services of educated men—this Bey and that Bey—they were all Franks. Whence they came no one knew, or seemed to care to know ; in their new character all that had been of old life seemed completely to have merged and passed away. He was personally acquainted with one of these men, to whom he would entrust his secret—through him he should find an

opening,—and he resolved at once to go to Egypt.

It happened, fortunately enough, that the ship was bound for the Levant; he offered himself to the captain to work his passage, and was accepted.

And thus was Edward Aubrey transformed into Omar Bey.

We have seen, through what has been related by Grace Birchell, in what spirit he had pursued this new career. In truth her little narrative scarcely does justice to it. . . . His efforts to enlighten and soften the dark, hard spirit of the supreme ruler, and to lighten the weight of his tyranny to those miserable creatures whom he oppressed and trampled upon as men might do upon reptiles they consider unworthy of their regard, were unremitting.

In these efforts he had first found alleviation, and, ultimately, peace. But his heart, though his country seemed exchanged for another and forgotten, remained true to its first love.

He married from compassion alone the lovely

orphan girl whom he had found deserted, in a position the most perilous. He had no heart to give away, but the woman he loved had married another, as he learned by the English newspapers. His brother had supplanted him, then, in every thing, and Emma was inconstant—the last tie that bound together his old life and his new was finally severed by this last blow.

He cared, after that, little what became of him. Happiness there existed, henceforth, none for him—he might as well marry as not, and rescue this poor young thing from the perils which surrounded her; he would have argued just in the same manner if she had been as ugly as Hecatissa—he only looked upon Ada's remarkable beauty as rendering the dangers of her situation the more imminent.

But man gets attached to that which he has benefited and which clings to him—and his infant boy laid fast hold upon his heart. But it was not till Ada died that he became aware how much she had become to him.

After her death he became less patient with his situation, more irritated against the obstacles that perpetually obstructed his at-

tempt to improve the system he abhorred, and benefit the wretched creatures so foully dealt with. He began to despair of doing good where he was—Egypt was filled with painful associations—he felt that it was impossible to remain there any longer.

So, having provided for his friends the Birchells by the living which he happened to learn was vacant, and which he found means, without discovering himself, to influence his brother thus to bestow—and having secured, as he thought, the well-being of his little boy—he resolved at once to have done with this simulacrum of civilised life and all its inherent mischiefs, and plunge at once into the darkest depths of that savage existence where evils still more horrible were daily going on. He would try whether the torch of truth might not be carried even there. He should be among the first who had endeavoured at any such thing, and should, probably, perish in the attempt ; but if he died—he should die a martyr—and what could he do better.

How better devote the ruin of a life?

If he fell, he should at least have opened a passage—others would follow, and the work

sooner or later be done. It is by the insertion of the almost imperceptible edge of the wedge that all great enterprises are effected.

And so on his way he went—and the waters had, as it were, a second time closed over him—he had not been heard of more.

Then he was dead, twice dead and yet not altogether dead—That rest of the spirit which sooner or later gives peace and repose to the heart whose best affections are buried in the grave, was no longer for her.

Unhappy Emma! The image was revived, but with the cruellest uncertainty as to the fate of him she had lost, attached to it. With this, too, came the miserable feeling that she had proved unworthy of this great and good man by her inconstancy—the remorse of her heart being still further aggravated by very serious self-reproach, for suffering even her thoughts to waver in their allegiance to him she had accepted as her husband.

Pity for William, whom she felt as if she had wronged in his dearest affections by

accepting with a divided heart—discontent with herself—cruel agonising uncertainty as to Edward's fate, kept her in a state of disturbance approaching to torture.

And in the midst of these distractions, her friend, her only staff and support, was taken away.

Grace was obliged to accompany her husband to a remote part of Scotland in order to attend upon his mother, who was dying of a lingering and fearful disorder, and of whom he was the only child.

But as if all this was not enough—fresh causes for agitation arose almost immediately after Grace's departure.

CHAPTER X.

But lo! the bursting Sun!

Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam
Straight the black vapour melteth, and in globes
Of dewy glitter gems each plant and tree.

COLERIDGE.

ONE morning Emma and her husband were sitting at breakfast together—it was the time at which the post usually came in.

They were conversing in their ordinary listless manner; she thinking of anything but what they were talking about—he, as usual, looking pale, absent, and melancholy.

He took the bag from the servant's hand, unlocked it, and sorted the letters for distribution.

“What is this letter?” he said, turning one in his hand, “For you, my Emma—and,” examining the different numberless postage-marks —“from Central America, it is! it is! . . .

My love, be composed—there will be news from your brother.”

“From Algernon!”—rising hastily, and seizing the letter which he held,—“from Algernon—dear, long-lost Algernon! . . . Ah, it is not his hand.”

“There will be news of him,—be composed, my love.”

For William already divined that a letter to Lady Emma, from such a quarter, and in a strange hand, could bear but one description of tidings.

“Ah. Algernon!—Ah, my brother!”—and the tears began to course each other down her cheeks.

She opened the letter, and found it as they both had anticipated.

The letter was from a Roman Catholic Priest—a missionary in Central America, and was dated Camayagua.

It contained intelligence of the death of Lord Algernon Mordaunt in that remote place, by yellow fever. He had been many years lost to his friends, and had been buried in Central America. Making researches, as it would appear, in that obscure and interesting

quarter of the world—and, for the last few months, had been residing at Camayagua, under an assumed name. There he had become acquainted with this Roman Catholic Missionary, who, by his letter, appeared to be a good and sensible man. The relation of the death of the unhappy young nobleman was thus given—

“It was not till his disorder had become such as to occasion the most serious apprehensions, that I was made aware of his illness, though we had become well acquainted. The refinement of his manners, and his intellectual accomplishments were such, as are rarely found in these neglected quarters of the globe,—and to one so long buried, as it were, and severed from European society, as I am, it was the highest possible gratification to enjoy his company. He seemed on his part to love me not a little. Our intimacy had not subsisted long, before I began to perceive how restless and uneasy his temper was, and the painful doubts upon every subject most seriously interesting to man, with which he was afflicted. He would, indeed, at times indulge in a tone of levity as regarded such things which I own was extremely

painful to me, but I thought I could perceive that his manner was affected,—and in some degree intended to draw me out to speak my mind with less reserve than usually became me, in my intercourse with men of a different persuasion from my own. I did not fail to profit by the opportunities thus afforded, and as a humble servant of my Great Master, endeavour to turn his mind by degrees to those ideas which might be profitable, and gradually lead him to take refuge in the fold of the true and only Shepherd.

“ He would listen—sometimes with serious attention, at others indulging in a ridicule approaching to contempt. But there was one subject upon which I found him always interested ; and it was that of auricular confession.

“ I never spoke, as I thought it my duty to do, upon that which my Church considers of so vital and deep importance, but he attentively, I must say anxiously, listened ; and when I enlarged upon the rest to be obtained by a troubled spirit, in thus removing the burden from the oppressed heart, and receiving pardon and absolution through the

hands of the priest, his countenance would assume the most earnest and serious expression; and he would often continue lost in deep meditation long after I had ceased to speak.

“ ‘ Ah! if I could but believe it,’ I heard him, after one of these long silences, ejaculate to himself.

“ ‘ And why should you not?’ I said.

“ ‘ And why should I?’ was his answer.— ‘ You priests!—I have seen too much of you priests! I have been about the world rather too long, my good Padre—You should have caught me in the cradle . . . and would to heaven you had! for my burden is greater than I can bear.’

“Such sentiments as the last words expressed rarely escaped him—the sarcastic tone of the former ones was but too commonly indulged in. But I must say that they were never uttered without being immediately apologized for—for a perfect gentleman he was in all his ways.

“It was plain, however, to me that some heavy secret weighed upon his mind; and I regretted as much as he could do, that an early training had not prepared his soul to receive such help and consolation as our Holy

Mother Church holds forth for the relief of the wretched and penitent sinner.

“ I will not weary your Ladyship with enlarging further upon this topic, but will proceed with my melancholy narration.

“ We continued upon the terms I have spoken of for several months, and I did not perceive, various as his moods seemed to be, that I made any very perceptible progress in influencing his mind as I could have wished.

“ At last it came to pass that I was under the necessity of leaving Camayagua for a short time, upon business connected with my calling. I left my friend in perfect health—what was my horror and distress on inquiring for him upon my return to find, that he had been struck down with the yellow fever, and, as was expected, had but a few short hours to live.

“ Alas! such sudden and awful catastrophes are but too common in these unblessed lands.

“ I hastened to him, and found, alas! that it was but too true. He was already in a state which affords little or no hope of recovery.

“ As I entered the room in which he lay,

he asked in a feeble voice, 'Who is there?' then perceiving it was I, a gleam of satisfaction came over his countenance, and he held out his hand, saying—'I thought you would have been too late. I am glad you are come.'

"I said something of my grief at finding him thus—and then, as I thought it my duty to do, began to enter upon the grand and one important subject of what was to follow that change which he was about to undergo.

"I ventured to hint—that now, or never more, was the time to profit by the great benefit our Holy Church holds out to sinners in such cases, through the sacraments of confession and consequent absolution—extreme unction, and other sacred means of moderating, if not of escaping altogether, the scorching flames of Purgatory—and finally attaining the bliss of Paradise.

"He shook his head.

"Old things—things long ago forgotten, are often found to revive with a strange vividness in the memory of the dying. So it appears to have been with him, for presently he began thus;

"'Drowning men, as I have been told,

have this experience—that before they become insensible, all the past incidents of their lives,—things long obliterated from memory, are, as by a flash of lightning, suddenly revealed to perception, and, in a manner the most inconceivable, every past event is, in the twinkling of an eye, disclosed.’

“ He stopped as if for want of breath, and, looking in my face, saw that tears were in my eyes—and a great anxiety for his soul’s welfare, no doubt, was written in my face.

“ He looked affectionately up, and pressed my hand.

“ ‘ My dear Padre,’ he said, ‘ this is very kind of you.’

“ ‘ Oh ! that you would but be kind to yourself,’ I exclaimed.

“ He gently shook his head.

“ ‘ I cannot quite in your way—but I was telling you . . . I once read in a book, what made a great impression upon me at the time—but I had forgotten it, with so many things else that were good ; and it was long ago . . . but now things come to my recollection when death comes, and this

among the rest . . . The subject of the book was the life of one of the greatest of men and of statesmen—and it related the spirit in which that man of exalted intellect, and the strongest and proudest character, met death.

“ ‘I trust in nothing but the sacrifice of our all-merciful Saviour—I have no other hope,’ William Pitt said—‘and that,’ added Lord Algernon, and he squeezed my hand fervently as he spoke—that is *my* last and only dying hope—and if this is expecting too much from His mercy—poor, dear, Padre, what can *you* do ?’

“ It was not a time for argument. I could only bow my head and humbly pray that, through the hidden mysteries of God’s mercy,—such faith, though not altogether that of the Holy Church, might prove effectual to save him.

“ After he had said this I had certainly the satisfaction to observe, that the expression of his face grew more calm and tranquil—he looked as I had never seen him look before.—It was a sort of earnest of Pardon. May his imperfect faith avail!—Amen.

“ He lay silently for some time, as if collecting his thoughts to speak again. Then he asked for a little of his cordial, and requested that every one but myself would leave the room.

“ He seemed somewhat invigorated by the medicine—he begged me to sit down upon a chair by his bed side, and taking my hand, thus addressed me.

‘ We have spoken much upon the subject of confession, Father. I was not able, as you know, quite to enter into your view of the subject. It seemed to me at the time, that one man had nothing to do with another man’s sins—that we must each one bear our own burdens, heavy as they may be—and that it was not for one poor sinner to assume to himself the power to absolve, or release another. It never struck me until now how great a duty confession to a fellow creature, in one point of view, might become—and what a needful and necessary act of justice it was to make full avowal of our bad deeds when, through them we have been the means of implicating an innocent fellow creature. Therefore, dear Padre,

—Roman priest as you are—will you receive the confession of one out of the pale of your church ; and promise me to forward it to England—Please to take pen and paper, and write for me what I shall dictate. It will be the act of a good Christian man so to do.’

“ I felt some scruples, situated as he was, to allow this vital matter to pass over so, without further attempts upon my part to alter his views ; but I saw so plainly that his mind was made up—that argument would be of no avail—that time alas ! was so short, and that some innocent man might be permanently injured, if I refused to let it be as he desired, that I took my pen, and wrote what I have the honour to enclose to your ladyship, his dearly loved sister.

‘ My dear Emma’—thus he began—

‘ I have been a very bad man—a Cain, and worse than Cain. I have flung away advantages such as few possess, in the indulgence of the wildest passions, and if I have not slain the bodies of my fellow creatures, I have done worse, far worse, for I have slain their souls—many, many souls I have assisted to ruin by my example—and though I have not

murdered my brother—I have murdered the reputation of an innocent man.

‘ That man is now dead. A victim, as I believe, to my own base cowardice, and contemptible and dishonourable conduct, in using him as a shield to protect my own life and reputation ; and suffering him in my place to receive the blows which belonged to, and were deserved by me.

‘ Knowing him to be dead ;—thinking that the worst that could be done *was* done—and that there was no help for it . . . in that vile spirit of utilitarianism, which has debased and degraded so many souls—I allowed myself to indulge mean and cowardly thoughts such as these—What is the use of exposing yourself now ? He is dead, and his father is dead, and his brother, maybe cares little enough about his memory ; and Emma will be none the worse for thinking ill of him—so can’t you be quiet and let things alone !

‘ And so I have continued silent.

‘ There is a worm, however, that gnaws—there is a voice, and it is of God, within us, which speaks, whether we will or not. I

have been a restless and miserable man ever since I came to this resolution, and if Cain carried the mark imprinted on his forehead—I had it there, on my heart.

‘ I changed my name. I would fain have changed myself—I have been wandering about the world ever since, seeking that which I could not find—Peace.

‘ But my proud rebellious heart was unworthy of, was incapable of, peace.

‘ And now, I am lying upon my death bed. It would have been generous to make the confession whilst I could live to be shamed—it is a contemptible effect, perhaps, of pure fear—perhaps of a better feeling—the sense of justice, which draws this confession from me at last, in order to restore the reputation of the bravest, the most generous fellow, that as I hope for pardon, it is my belief, ever walked upon the face of this earth—Edward Aubrey.

‘ You are married to his brother I have heard. I dare say it is true. William Aubrey was in love with you long ago ; and he’s a good fellow in his way and clever—But you will neither of you have forgotten Ed-

ward—and you will be glad to receive, and glad to publish—and I earnestly beg, heavily at my expense as it will be, that you immediately do publish this confession of mine, and restore his honour and good name.’

Then followed a detailed recapitulation of the circumstances connected with the forged cheque.

The letter proceeded thus :

‘ Now you have it all—and my strength begins to fail, and terrible death—death coldly approaching upon a sick bed, is staring me in the face.

‘ I have but one hope—mark, Emma—but one hope. A vile sinner I am—but I never knew my Saviour till now. That is all I can say for myself. Now, at last, I think I do know Him, and on Him I rest—on Him alone—and oh ! that I could offer Him the sacrifice of a life, in return for the infinite mercy which at this awful moment supports and helps me.

‘ William and Emma, you have, maybe, not thought much more of these things than I have done ; but you are not great sinners as I have been.—Bless *Him* for that—and

turn to him *now—now—now*—before you lie as I am lying. And so God bless and keep you both—for I can say no more—I am going—

‘ALGERNON MORDAUNT.’

“He ceased to breathe about half an hour after he had ceased to dictate. And, may the hopes and prayers the humble priest has in secret offered for his poor soul be counted no sin in him, and be effectual for the departed—and may the respected Lady Emma, and the good gentleman, her husband, be wise in time, and seek shelter in the bosom of the true church, and so be absolved from their sins—Amen.”

Thus ended the letter of the good priest.

They had read it sitting upon a sofa together in her boudoir, to which they had retired, leaving their untouched breakfast.

She read and he listened. Her voice was often rendered inarticulate by her sobs, and the tears were gushing down and falling in large drops upon the letter, and she wiping

them away, and so taking up the letter again and striving to read on. But through those flowing tears, the sun was softly shining—a tender glow of satisfaction spread over her face. She turned to William with a countenance which beamed through her tears—“*He* is penitent—and Edward is innocent—Thank God!—thank God!”

But there was no response on the part of the husband.

His head had sank down nearly to his knees, and he sat with it buried in his hands, shaking as if in an ague fit.

“William—William” she cried, “What is this?”—then softly, “My poor William! and did you love him so?—Is even this too much for you—this, I will call, comfortable letter? Oh! William! think—to have him restored to our esteem!—He is dead, poor fellow—but to have his memory restored to our esteem!—To *know* for a certainty that what I have ever believed true, *was* true, that he was innocent. He is dead, but we can weep in peace for him now—dear! well-loved! honourable! generous Edward!—Dead is he? Perhaps—oh perhaps he still lives!—He is not dead.”

He started bolt upright to his feet—his hair stood on end, his face was ghastly.

“Not dead!—Not dead!” he rather shrieked than cried, “In the name of all that is holy, —what do you mean by that?”

“I was wrong—very wrong—to say it so suddenly. Dear William be composed—sit down—you are not well—sit down.”

He shuddered, his whole frame was shaking terribly, but he did, as she besought him, and sat down again by her side.

After a violent struggle, as it seemed, with himself—he at length turned to Emma and said—

“What reason have you for believing he may possibly be alive? You told me this too suddenly.”

“Indeed, I did, and I was very, very wrong—and more wrong, because it is the faintest hope in the world; built upon the most trifling or improbable circumstances—I did not intend, and surely I ought not, even to have hinted at the subject until I had obtained a something more approaching to assurance—for I fear it is but the wildest fancy of mine. . . .”

As thus she went on, endeavouring to excuse herself and compose him ; she succeeded in a manner that surprised herself. She could not but perceive that as the possibility of his brother being still living appeared more remote he became more tranquil, and this discovery gave her extreme pain.

She turned away disappointed as usual.

Were their feelings never to sympathise—and could he, even upon this subject, be so differently affected from what she was ! And when this fearful scene at last ended by William rising, and abruptly quitting the room, leaving the letters behind him, her perplexity as she continued to muse—sitting upon the sofa where he left her—became only the more and more distressing.

She had long ceased to love—a certain partiality and admiration which she had at first felt, had yielded to the wearisome estrangement, which had, unaccountably to her, grown up between them. Strange misgivings and doubts, as to the motives for many of his actions, had arisen in her mind, increased by the mysterious sadness of his temper—but upon the present occasion, suspicions, the most painful

as regarded his feelings and character, began to be formed.

Could it be possible—was it in human nature—that a man should love an estate better than a brother? Could the dread of losing his property occasion this distress and terror at the idea of Edward being still alive—that satisfaction, not to be mistaken, which he evinced, when he found how little ground there was for the expectation.

Emma began to look upon her husband as one of the most selfish and heartless of human beings.

Her sentiments were not softened by adverting to the old attachment between herself and Edward, a cause for the feelings she regarded with so much contempt. Her heart was too innocent and guileless, to advert to such a thing. William was her husband, that was enough ; love him or love him not, she was his wife, and there was no other man on earth for her.

The idea of referring his unnatural coldness to jealousy never entered her head—It would have made her very indignant if it had—yet certainly, might have tended to miti-

gate the indignant contempt, with which she regarded what she thought such mean, and base self-interestedness.

From that time the alienation of husband and wife increased.

The subject, so deeply interesting to both, became a forbidden one between them. Emma could not endure to allude to the sacred subject of Edward's re-established honour, to one she thought so indifferent upon the subject as to be unworthy to hear it mentioned, and thus William had no opportunity of explanation or chance of recovering her good opinion.

Yet his extreme wretchedness and depression ended in softening her heart towards him once more. Pity was so strong within her.

But this feeling only increased her sufferings.

Sometimes she yearned towards Edward's memory, with a love in strength and purity not to be described—at others the hope that he might yet be living shot through her heart, to be succeeded by a sudden feeling of

terror—for was not this, in spirit to wrong her unhappy husband?

He lived perhaps, he was innocent—and she had been deceived and untrue to him—and how was she not untrue to William, equally innocent, and making him equally miserable.

Oh! pity that she suffered herself to be persuaded—why was she inconstant to Edward's memory!

Oh! she ought to have had faith—she ought to have had fidelity—she ought to have been his virgin widow—not the mourning bride of the man who adored her and yet whom she made so supremely miserable!

CHAPTER XI.

SHE faded rapidly, yet nothing seemed seriously amiss, but William became anxious and more unhappy than ever. — “Lady Emma wants change,” said the medical practitioner, whom he consulted.

“Emma, my love, you ought to change the air.—You are looking paler, and more and more out of order, every day.”

“Nay, don’t say that, Mr Aubrey—If any one looks pale and out of order, it is yourself.”

“I—it is much the same every day with me—I am never very particularly *in* order—but *you*—” and he looked at her with a wistful melancholy tenderness, “you—once so blooming and so gay !—what have you

done with your fine colour and your fine spirits, Emma?"

"I don't know," she answered; "I think life is insipid—I believe you have spoiled me.—I once heard a man say, that no one could be happy who was without a wish. . . .You have left me without a wish."

And she tried to smile cheerfully upon him, but the smile was wan and spiritless.

There was a spectre continually haunting them. Some evil influence seemed to hang over both. The memory of the past, instead of gradually fading into a healthy natural indistinctness, seemed to become more vivid every day.

The child! Whose was that child? . . . That Bey of Egypt of whom Mary had spoken—that European so full of ability, so devoted to the cause of justice and humanity? It could not be Edward! Edward had perished in the waters—could there be a doubt of that? Yet, had he really and indeed perished?—or was his death a lie and delusion as the stain upon his honour had been.—Oh, how was it?—how was it?

These perplexities brought the subject per-

petually before her. She could think of nothing else. The image of Edward was for ever present. The daily actual life seemed to lose its relish. What little affection she had felt for her husband seemed altogether to fade into indifference under the influence of these new interests and feelings. She was restless, dissatisfied, miserable.

But one desire there was, which she felt a morbid craving to gratify.—This was an intense longing to visit the place where Edward had perished.—To see and to inquire upon the subject for herself. She thought if she could go there, these doubts, these hopes and fears, which kept her mind so restless, would be satisfied—that once there she should be able to assure herself of the fact of Edward's death or escape from death.

It was a distracting feeling after all that urged her on. A hope that he yet might be alive mingled with a sort of sickening terror lest that hope should be verified. With delight inexpressible she had hailed the first idea that he was not dead—that they were not for ever parted—that they might meet again—but soon arose the thought of—how?

—With an impassable gulph between them, which she had herself created! separated, and for ever, in a manner still worse than by death!—separated by the ties they had each formed, and doubtless under equally mistaken impressions!—she had believed him dead—he had believed her faithless!

Oh, better, perhaps, that he should have perished, than thus to meet again.

And yet, in spite of this, the irritating desire for satisfaction of her doubts kept rankling at her heart—She could not rest.

“Mr Pinfold recommends change of air,” said her husband.

She looked up at the anxious face.—Alas, she loved him less and less every day; of that she felt too cruelly conscious—Less and less! and he to love her only the more and more. What a miracle of ingratitude she was becoming!

“You make no answer, Emma.”

“Oh fatal silence and reserve!” he ejaculated to himself, “if she would but open her heart to me! . . . I thought these memories would pass away, as the ordinary course of such

things—what can thus keep them alive—if she would but open her heart to me?”

And then he sickened to think, if she did, what image might be found engraved there.

Change of scene, however, he felt persuaded was the best remedy that could be applied. He had, in the indulgence of his own love of retirement and quiet, selfishly kept her too much secluded.

True, she had always seemed contented that so it should be; she never seemed to care for general society; but it was not the less a mistaken plan—most trying to the spirits, and especially injurious under her circumstances.

“I have been thinking, my love, that if you were to go to the sea or to some watering-place—Sidmouth, Torquay, Leamington.” . . .

“The sea,” she repeated, and she looked suddenly up—“Yes, yes—I should like to go to the sea.”

“The sea is but a melancholy place,” he said, his countenance slightly changing.

“Yes, for you.” She would not add, ‘and for me too;’ she was far too conscious of the deep melancholy associated with the sea in

her mind to pain her husband by alluding to it—she went on—“but I have a great wish to go to the sea.”

“So be it then,” he said, attempting to speak cheerfully, “the sea by all means if you wish it—Where will you go? Brighton?—But that is such an overgrown place—the coast of Devonshire is beautiful, north or south—there is Torquay—there is Sidmouth—there is

“No, no—not that.”

“What other place then—dear Emma, how you would oblige me by saying, at once, what you would like.”

“There is a place you have belonging to yourself, near the sea.” His countenance began to darken, but she was looking upon the floor and did not observe it. “It is there I have an intense desire”She checked herself, and altered the sentence to—“I should so much like to go there.”

“To that place! To that place, Emma!” he cried, struggling with his emotion—“Do not go there! Do not. You cannot surely wish to go there!—of all places upon earth, not there!”

“It is the caprice of illness, I dare say

—for, indeed, I do not know what ails me, but I do not feel well—and I so wish to go *there*. Let me go there, William. Do not refuse me. I shall be easier, I think, when I have once been there.”

“Of course,” he said gloomily, “the place has a mournful interest attached to it—but I should have thought neither you nor I, Emma, could have borne to visit the spot. Don’t go there.”

“We feel differently,” was the reply. In truth the desire, now she had once given it utterance, seemed to increase in intensity. She felt as if she could have neither rest nor peace till it was gratified. “Don’t deny me, William, I entreat you. It will do me good—nothing else will. Indulge the whim, if it be a whim—indulge it for my sake.”

“No, it is no whim,” he answered bitterly—“it is—it is—I see it! Eight long, terrible, terrible years. Oh!” and he clapped his hand suddenly to his forehead. “God alone, He knows how time has passed with me since that fatal hour, but nothing can obliterate the remembrance from my mind, it lives there in all its first intensity. But I thought, I hoped,

. . . . Alas, I hoped it had been different with you. . . .”

“Do not be jealous of the dead, William, it is a sort of blasphemy. Sure it is permitted to preserve the holy memory of the dead. I do not wish to distress you. Heaven knows how I have struggled to overcome what I feel—but it is too hard for me. He is there—he seems to beckon me to the spot—that image I cannot throw from my mind. When I have visited the place I hope and I think I shall be more able to conquer these feelings, for I know it is very wrong to cling to the memory of those that are gone, at the expense of the happiness of the remaining. Dear William, let it be as I say.”

“Do as you wish”—with a heavy sigh, and he was soon seen walking, or rather hastily striding, towards the plantations.

Once there, he buried himself in the thickest shade, alone with his miserable regrets—regrets which, since Lord Algernon’s letter had been received, seemed more poignant than ever.

He chose out the most gloomy and neglected paths, and walked on until he was at a

considerable distance from the house. At length he paused and sat himself down upon a lonely rustic seat, and leaning his face upon his arms, abandoned himself to all the bitterness of his heart.

He had sat there some time, when he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder. He looked up—it was Alice.

He started and shook the hand off, saying rather impatiently,

“What do you want with me?”

“William—my child . . . Nay, let me call you child—it does my poor heart good to call you child—what are you doing here? Why do you mope about in this melancholy way?—what *is* the matter? But it is nonsense to ask—I guess it well enough. William, my child, you are miserable.”

“Yes, I *am* miserable—most miserable!” he broke out, as if this silence, so long preserved, was no longer possible. “I own it—I own it—miserable I am—miserable I ever shall be! Yes—through the eternal ages—most miserable.”

The face of Alice became very dark—there was an expression of excessive pain upon it.

"You are not happy, then, after all—you are not happy. But don't confess it, Aubrey—don't say you are not happy."

"How should I be happy?"

"Yet have you not everything that the world can give to ensure a human creature happiness? What is wanting?—House, lands, wealth uncounted, and the woman you adore for your wife—what in the world is wanting?"

"That which the world cannot give," was his answer.

"I see how it is," Alice went on, with great bitterness. "She whom you so madly loved has proved on possession but a deception and a mockery. But this is no rare case. We all make ourselves idols but to find them clay. You are a wise man—you ought not to fret yourself because you cannot escape the general lot. Strive to give yourself to other things. Life does not—ought not—to depend upon the smiles or frowns of a capricious girl."

"Take care what you say, Alice—I insist upon your never speaking to me in that way. You do not love her, I know."

"No, I do not—I own that; and why

don't I? Because I see she does not love you, and will not make the being I alone love upon earth, happy."

"She is wishing very much to go to the Swiss cottage," said William, as if desirous to change the conversation.

"Just like her!—The very last place that you would care to visit, I should suppose; and I don't think it augurs any very good feeling on her part, to set her mind upon going to the scene of such a tragedy—but it is all of a piece."

"I do not mean to refuse her—she shall go there if she persists in wishing it."

"And will you go, too?"

"No—that I cannot. I shall stay with you here, Alice."

"Oh! so be it" with a joyful accent. "Let her go, by all means. We will get along without her—we will do without her."

"Yes," he said, almost mechanically. "I ought to learn to live without that which I see plainly never will be mine—her heart . . . the heavens are just."

"No—yes—no. Do not say so," repeated Alice, with emotion.

“What’s the matter?” he said, looking at her.

“Oh, nothing, nothing,” and she turned away, murmuring to herself, “Is that it—is that so? The heavens are just!—*are* just! Oh! that accounts for all.”

And now Lady Emma, accompanied by her servants and her little girl, has set forward upon a long, wearisome journey.

Railroads were not in those days, and the way was long; for the estate where they lived and that they called the Swiss cottage by the sea were at a great distance from each other.

She had obtained her wish to spend three weeks or a month at the Swiss cottage; and now that the boon was granted, she almost regretted that she had asked it.

It was evident that her husband associated so much pain with this place, that it was extremely unpleasant to him to be brought so much in association with it, as even for her letters to be dated from thence. As

for accompanying her himself, he declared it to be impossible.

In the consequent separation she acquiesced, feeling a little surprise at the strength of his repugnance. She had not done him justice, it seemed, nor given him credit for the brotherly affection he really felt, this was her self-blaming thought.

She had been so accustomed to his presence that she could not help feeling lonely enough when she set forwards by herself. She had so long been in the habit of living with one who loved her extravagantly, that, however cold and indifferent her own sentiments might be, she found the loss very great, and the consequent blankness and flatness of things far more than she could have imagined.

William Aubrey could not have hit upon a better method of arousing her dormant affection than by submitting to this short separation.

What a consolation—could he but have known how it had affected her! But this he was far from surmising.

She travelled along—now reading,—now observing the country which she passed

through, now sunk back in the corner of her carriage, musing upon the events of her life.

More especially her thoughts turned to Mrs Birchell, to her interesting history, to that wonderful man met with in Egypt ; that man who was, and was not—could not be, yet must be, the long lost of her heart—and again she sifted and compared every circumstance, dwelling most of all upon the child,—that wonderful resemblance of the child.

The evening of the third day brought her in sight of the downs, which, terminated by high cliffs, were bounded by the ocean. The road was carried over the summits of the heights, and commanded a splendid view of the green hills, and the sea beyond, now shining, in the evening light, glittering with ten thousand lines of mimic gold, as the waves gently carried each other to the shore, slightly wrinkling the calm and soft blue surface, the lofty white cliffs which girdled the coast looking so quiet and sublime !

Her heart beat fast, as she gazed through the window, and fixed her eyes upon the scene.

Even so,—that was the spot,—there were the cliffs over which he had fallen,—that was the ocean, now so calm and smooth, then raging in wild confusion, which had buried him in its bosom.

The carriage descended a steep hill, and then crossing a little valley, began laboriously to mount a steep ascent.

“That is the Swiss cottage,” said the postillion, turning round, and pointing to where a long line of plantations were becoming visible.

A few more yards, and the plantation I have before described was gained—and through the plantation now grown almost into woods, the peaked gables of the mansion were discernible.

Around and on each side spread the broad, green downs; before it rolled the beautiful blue sea. It was a charming evening—the air was quite still; the sun setting in a maze of purple and gold.

Yet lovely as it was, the scene bore to her a character of inexpressible loneliness and

melancholy, and the waves, as they murmured gently against the rocks to her gave forth a sad and plaintive sound.

However, they are arrived; through the gates and by the long-deserted coach road they have passed, and the door of the cottage is opened by an old woman—the identical person who had admitted Edward upon the fearful night of his father's death.

She had lived there ever since.

The aged woman lifted up her eyes to the Lady Emma, who had slowly descended from the carriage, oppressed with a heavy, spiritless sense of depression, and she said,

“You are welcome to the Swiss cottage, my lady. I thought none of the family would ever come here again.”

“You can scarcely be surprised at that,” said Emma, as she entered the house. “The recollections attached to this place are very terrible; but I wished to come myself to see

“It seems a lonely sort of place,” she added, after a little pause, and she looked round. “I feel very cold—would you be so good as to make a fire for us?”

The old woman flung open the door of the little drawing-room, and busied herself in taking away the greens out of the grate, and fetching the materials for a fire. Emma went to the window, and looked out towards the sea.

The wind was beginning to rise and the waters becoming somewhat troubled, and she could hear the waves breaking against the rocks, and uttering a hoarse and dreary sound.

She stood musingly for some time, then she turned, and looked round the little room again.

It was fitted up as a mere rustic cottage, with the utmost simplicity, but with a good taste, which would have rendered it very pleasing, only that the ceiling was low and the two casement windows were almost grown over with the neglected trailing plants which had been suffered to spread unpruned against the cottage walls ; so that, upon the whole, it was dark and gloomy.

“Take the child to bed,” said Emma to the nurse that accompanied her, “the little thing looks tired to death.—Come and kiss me, Imogene—don’t cry.”

“It looks so black and ugly,” said the little one ; and so, indeed, Emma thought herself, and was ready enough to have cried too. She kissed her little girl, and, having dismissed her, threw herself into an arm-chair, feeling excessively dismal, and wishing from her heart that she had never come. — Melancholy presentiments—sad forebodings seemed taking possession of her.

She tried to shake them off, but in vain. She walked about the little room, but there was nothing to amuse or engage her attention. A picture of the late Mr Aubrey over the chimney-piece was the sole painting which hung upon the walls. The tables were entirely bare ; there was no elegant little litter in this house, which had never known a mistress—there was not even a book—far less, a flower to be seen.

She returned to her arm-chair, and sat there, and for want of better amusement, watched the operations of the old woman as she proceeded to lay and light the fire. And then the invincible desire for companionship, which was quite a part of her nature, led her to open conversation with the old servant.

“This is not quite what I had expected,” she began. “I think it is rather a dreary looking place.”

“You may well say that my lady,” was the reply. “It is the very dismallest place now as ever was—but it hadn’t used to be so when those as are gone were all alive. But some way I think, my lady, where a great wrong has been done like—just before people died—though the ghosts may not come . . . for they tell me there be no such things, something as bad or worse hangs about the place somehow.”

“‘A great wrong!’ What do you mean by that?”

“Why, my lady, it’s no business of mine to judge, but somehow one’s heart *did* cleave to the captain. Why he was the sweetest-tempered, pleasantest young gentleman ever you set your eyes upon ; but, perhaps, you may have seen him—We heard that he made a great noise in London town like, after that great victory of his’n, so, perhaps, you may have seen him yourself in some of them great squeegeing parties, my lady.”

“Yes,” answered Emma, “Yes, I have seen

him—but, what did you mean about the house and ‘a great wrong.’ It does seem very lonely and dismal,” she added, looking round and drawing her shawl round her—half shivering, half shuddering as she sat.

In truth it was so, for the tide had turned, clouds were rising in the east, the beauty of the evening was over, the melancholy boughs of the scrambling and neglected shrubs and trees, which hung and darkened the cottage, began to sway up and down in a mournful manner, the wind whistled sorrowfully through them, and the voice of the ocean began to change, and the waves hoarsely to lash the rocks.

“Very melancholy—I wish that I had never come.—What could bewitch me to come.”

“Why I *was* surprised, I own, my lady,” said the old woman, who seemed to love a little talk at heart, and who was, indeed, one of those regular, clever old women, that one at times meets with among the lower classes and whose talents for conversation quite bewitch one to listen.

“I *was* surprised, my lady, but I was

mighty glad—for it's a lonesome life I and the gardener lead here—and that's the truth—very glad to hear that your ladyship and the young miss were a coming at last.—Ah! but she's a pretty creature, and so, begging pardon, be you.—”

Emma made no answer.

The old woman went on:

“So I was glad, but I was surprised, as I said, for sure thought I, never would one of the family come to *this* place again. It must be awful to others, as well as to me. It's a dreadful sight, my lady, to see an old man on his death-bed. And he, with something most near a curse on his lips, disinheriting his own son—and such a son!—One that never harm'd a worm, much less his own father. Did you ever hear tell of the story about a dog?—If it didn't make me cry like a baby—The noble young captain a-going back to the ship all by himself because he wouldn't put his men in danger for a dog. But he'd do it all the same, himself.—He had a right as he thought, to save the dog, so no one else was in danger. Oh, it *was* a pretty story, my lady.”

“I have heard it,” murmured Emma, “it was a lovely story.”

“Well, all I have to say is, if I’d been his father I’d have looked twice, wouldn’t I—Aye, I’d have died a thousand times over before I disinherited and broke the heart of *such* a son.”

“Broke his heart!—I thought,” said Emma, in a low trembling voice, “that he had fallen by accident from the cliffs, and was drowned.”

“Broke his heart, or drove him to despair—and so he drowned himself—it’s all one. Yes, that’s true—he didn’t die, as they say, of a broken heart; but it’s all one—he was drove to despair, I say. And that makes a man beside himself—and at such a time the demon catches hold of him. Aye, just in the nick, and drives him to desperation. It’s a fearful thing is desperation—Fell over the cliffs! That’s what they say up at the Hall, is it? Yes, yes—all right; he *did* fall over the cliffs for sure.”

“What do you mean? Is there any doubt that he did?” cried Lady Emma, starting up, her heart beating violently, and seizing the

old woman by the arm, "Is there any doubt? —Perhaps—perhaps he did *not* perish."

"Perish! If you mean drowned—He fell into the water, that's certain, and no one ever saw his face, poor fellow, again; that's very like being drowned. No, my lady, what I meant was, whether he fell over by accident, as some say, or whether he was drove over by despair none knows—but if by despair, why, then . . . the Lord have mercy upon his soul, poor creature!"

Emma's face had by this time become very pale; but there was a fascination for her in the subject and in the good old woman's talk. She felt impelled by a sort of fatal curiosity to ask more. She resumed her seat and went on.

"Disinherited! I never heard of that. He died, and his brother, of course, succeeded to the estates. I never heard that he was disinherited. I always understood that he was old Mr Aubrey's favourite son."

"And so he was—and so he was—too much his favourite perhaps, as we old servants used to think—and pitied Mr William; but let

those judge as knows—Mr William was a shrewd man, after all.”

“Mr William Aubrey is my husband, recollect. Please not to say anything against Mr William Aubrey,” said Lady Emma, whose heart began to tremble with vague apprehension.

“And so he be for certain. I beg your pardon, my lady. I am sure I didn’t mean to say a word against my master. We all pitied Mr William Aubrey in former days—but we loved the Captain. Mr William, everybody admired Mr William—he’s so clever; but we, one and all, loved the Captain.”

“The fire burns now. You may go,” Emma at last said.

CHAPTER XII.

A haunting shade of more than grief,
To which man's world brings no relief.

MONTGOMERY.

AND the fire did begin to crackle and blaze ; and Emma took a low chair, and sat down by it. She threw herself back, and listened to the melancholy moaning of the rising wind and to the sea beating against the rocks, and to the silent reproaches and the painful misgivings of her own heart.

That remorse for the dead, which she had felt ever since she had received Lord Algeron's letter—that remorse for the uncomplaining dead, whom we have, however unwittingly, injured by a false opinion, and betrayed by even an imaginary inconstancy, fell heavily upon her now.

He had been so worthy—and she had sus-

pected him—So generous, and she had condemned him. He had sacrificed everything to her brother, and for her sake, and she had been false to his memory, and had married another.

He was innocent—entirely innocent of the great offence; and he had lain under the imputation of a mean and base crime, rather than expose his friend to the revenge of his father. And on whom had that father wreaked his anger? This darling son—disinherited, and driven him to despair! And thus Edward had died—her Edward—her loved and honoured Edward—Cruel!—cruel! but doubtless frantic with despair.

Oh, that roaring sea! It was in those waves Edward had died.

Why—why did she come here?

She must hear more. She *must* hear more of the details of that fatal, fatal night. It might be beneath her station, a great impropriety, to seek information upon family matters from a mere servant, and listen to the tales of an ignorant dependent—but listen she must. She was alone, and most wretched and restless. Satisfaction she must have.

She put her hand upon the bell. The old woman appeared again.

“Did you ring, my lady?”

“I want some tea, and for you to make it in the room. Bring the tea-things and the kettle: it will amuse me to have it made in the room. There is a storm coming on, I think. How dismally the wind howls!”

“Ah! my lady, how that wind *does* howl to be sure at times. Not like wind somehow. It is like the shrieking of a human voice—it minds one so. I’ve often thought to ask the master to put me into some other place. Yet I’ve a love for this. I’ve been here three-and-twenty year come Michaelmas.”

“Fetch the tea-things, and make the tea yourself, please.”

And then Emma fell back again in her chair, and relapsed into her melancholy silence.

The tea things were set and the tea-kettle was singing upon the fire. It had been Mr Aubrey’s fancy—it is often the whim of those surfeited with “too much,” to have things

in this simple way. At this Swiss cottage of his everything was conducted upon the simplest plan. No man-servant was retained to wait upon him when there—a couple of women were all the domestics to be seen. The men lived in the stables away from the house. There was neither plate nor luxurious superfluity of any sort—there was not even a tea-urn. He loved to hear the kettle humming on the fire, as it hummed at the very moment we write of—to sit with the casement open, listening to the rising of the wind and the hoarse breaking of the waves; and have this old servant to make his tea for him, just as she was about to do for the young mistress.

Lady Emma kept reposing thoughtfully in her chair sipping her tea, and it was some time before she broke silence. At last she began :

“ And you loved Captain Aubrey ? ” .

“ Who could help loving him ! I’d known him from a baby, and sure was he not the sweetest babe, and the sweetest child, and the gloriousest, brave, bold, loving boy ? Don’t I remember him ? the darling ! when he first put on his dress

as a naval Caddy, I think they call it—and the dear little miniature of an officer as he looked—just like a real officer made small—so pretty!—as pretty as a fairy tale! And his mother, that was so sorry to part with him—but go he must—nothing else would serve him. And what a load of pocket money he had, for sure! one a giving this, and t' other that—and how he laid it out! every penny of it, but a few shillings, in presents to us all, afore he went away. And gave his brother William such a beautiful set of books—because Master William loved little else but his books. He was a clever boy like, was Master William—always stuck to his books.”

“Nobody loved him then, I suppose, because he was good and clever, and stuck to his books.”—

“Oh yes! my Lady, we loved him, and were so sorry for him; but it was not in one, not to love t' other best—who on earth could help loving t' other best?”

Emma sighed—her heart responded, “who on earth could help loving t' other best?”

He was dead—there was no crime in owning

it now. It seemed to her like a sort of compensation for her injustice and inconstancy to own it now—to own what she had ever felt, but never till lately allowed herself to confess even to her inmost heart—that it was impossible to help “liking the t’other best.”

“But the Captain offended his father, who loved him—so you said, I think—How came he to do that—he should not have done that?”

“Ah, my Lady, but it *was* a pity—them clubs in London be awful things, as I’ve heard tell.”

“Clubs! All young men belong to clubs.”

“The more the pity—the more the pity,” shaking her head, “but I have heard say there be clubs and clubs—there be some are very respectable godly sort of things, where a young man only goes for to eat his dinner, read his books and meet his friends, and so on—but there *be* clubs—oh! my Lady—so they say, where these poor boys do such ruinatious things! Playing cards and dice, and I do’nt know what—and where they lose such awful heaps of money. But who persuaded our Captain to go to such sort of

places I don't know ; but some one beguiled him, I'll lay my life on it—for merry as he used to be, he was never a dissipated young man. But at these dens of wickedness, I'm assured he managed to lose a power of money, and I am very much afraid he did."

Lady Emma sighed again. "And so that made old Mr Aubrey very angry?"

The old woman went on, "Sure it was enough to make him angry—but he might have forgiven such a son for a mishap and an ill-doing of that sort once in a way. Such a dear, brave son ! and just come home victorious—he might have forgiven him—and so I think he would, but that was not it. Oh it's a bad, bad story."

Lady Emma: "How was it ? Tell me all the story—You know I belong to the family—tell me all you know, pray do—Begin at the beginning and tell me all—Sit down there upon that chair by the fire—tell me all—but first shut the casement. How the wind does howl, and how the sea does roar!"

The old woman fastens the casement, and then sits down and pokes the fire, and lowers

her voice almost to a whisper, and thus began :

“ I don’t partly know if I can tell you all, my Lady, from the beginning, because as how I always lived at and took care of the Swiss cottage—and most part began and went on in London ; but if you like, I’ll tell you what I know. Poor old Mr Aubrey and the poor Captain ! The Lord have mercy upon them, and upon us all !

“ It was the end of the summer of that very year, when the Captain came home in the spring, all covered with glory, as they said—and I heard that there was great doings—and old Mr Aubrey as proud as a peacock, and the Captain going to see the Queen ; and that it was in the newspapers all about it—and that he’d been spoken of in the House of Lords and Commons—and we were so proud, we servants, and I proudest of all—I’d more time to love that lad and to think of him than them finer servants as lived at the Hall and in London.

“ I heard all these things from my son Tom, I forgot to say, as lived under-footman in the family—and who is a steady, clever

boy, and one as looks about him, and sees what's going on, and writes to his mother—that's myself—for servants will talk of what they see, you know, though my Tom's no tell-tale."

Lady Emma (rather impatiently): "Well—well—You heard how Captain Aubrey was honoured for all the glorious things that he had done—well, go on—what next—?"

The old woman: "Next I heard—it was like the cloud that was no bigger than a man's hand in the bible, as you read of in the Book of Kings."

Lady Emma nods.

The old woman: "But it grew to be a mighty tempest of wind and rain. First there came a little sound of old Mr Aubrey being anxious about his son and the company he kept—and then there came a tale of Edward being out o' nights, and not at Dukes' and Duchesses' and Lords' and Ladies' parties, as became such as him—but with ranting, harum-scarum young good-for-nothings as them clubs! And then there was a whisper of how Mr William Aubrey, as then was, used to be a talking to his father, and saying all as ever he could for his brother."

Lady Emma (starting up): "He *did* say all he could for his brother, then—I thought so . . ."

The old woman (shaking her head): "So they said then—it's a pity as how . . ."

Lady Emma (impatiently): "Go on with your story, please . . ."

Old woman: "And then at last all bursts out into a storm—and there's Ascot—that *nasty* Ascot—How many a quarrel in families have I known after that *Ascot*!—And there's a dreadful, dreadful blow up, and the Captain, bless him, has lost a might of money, and off he flies to *that* continent. What a lot of scapegraces they must be on that continent—Everyone who's in a muddle flies off there! It puts one in mind of that bad son Absalom's army, in the bible—And old Mr Aubrey is taken very, very ill—and nothing will serve him but down he must come here."

Lady Emma: "Poor old man!"

Old woman: "You'd have said so, my Lady, and you'd seen him when he arrived—I hardly knew him again—I didn't, and that's truth. He looked twenty years

older than when he left—so withered and shrunk, and shaky! I *was* sorry for him—He looked as weak as an infant and tottered as if he could hardly get along. He had lost the staff of his age, sure enough. The son as he loved and as he leaned on—and he never leaned, or cared to lean, upon that better staff—the Good Shepherd's staff.—No, no, not one among them had ever thought of leaning there—The more the pity—the more the pity—to my thinking.”

Lady Emma looks still more serious and attentive.

Old woman goes on: “I never shall forget his face, to my dying day—I shall never forget his face, so stern and so sorrowful—so hard, and firm, and stony—and so full of misery. It looked as if he had been tortured and never cried out. I wouldn't ha' been *him*!—no, not for all his riches.”

Lady Emma: “Poor, poor man!”

Old woman: “Aye, well may you say so, my Lady—them as wants the *true* riches, is poor, in spite of all. What could his riches do for him now?—and he nursing the bitterest of anger against the son of his bosom—It's

my belief nursing it the more *because* of his love—He daredn't give way at all, lest he should give way and forgive him altogether, and so be baulked of his revenge—As if we oughtn't to forgive, and as if the father of the prodigal should not fall upon his son's neck But old Mr Aubrey was a proud, resentful man. So he cast his prodigal son away at once—whistles him down the wind, as people say—and if I ventured to speak a word for him—for sickness and bed-lying bends down the proudest man's heart—and he'll talk a bit now and then to the woman as tends and nurses him—he must let out his heart some way, you know—But as I was saying, if I did venture for to say a word for the Captain—he'd silence me at once, looking dreadful, and saying 'He's no son of mine!—he's no child of this house!—no master of yours now, nor ever will be—I've discarded him for ever,—and this with such a look, as if he was breaking his own very heart of hearts as he said so."

Lady Emma: "And where was the other brother—the present Mr Aubrey, I mean—all this time?

Old woman : “ Why that’s what vexes one’s heart to think of. Aye as you say, where *was* he ?—Should he have left his father all this while, and never come near him to say one word for his brother ?—No, he who was, he who was—to come in, you see—if—in case old Mr Aubrey *did* discard his heir—Oh ! it’s bad—it’s bad—but I beg your pardon, my Lady.”

Lady Emma (again turning very pale and beginning to shake a little) : “ I thought you said just now that he—that William Aubrey did everything he could to pacify old Mr Aubrey and reconcile him with his brother.”

“ So they say—so they may please to say—but *why* did not he come down here ?—and *why* didn’t he stop that will being made ?—and *why* didn’t he swear and swear—that he wouldn’t take it, and that he wouldn’t have it—and that he’d not be a robber of his brother—I mean a profiter by his brother’s sin—if his brother *had* sinned past forgiveness—as I’ll never, never, to my dying day, believe that he really did.”

Lady Emma (gasping) : “ But, perhaps, he wrote—perhaps he wrote.”

Old woman: "No—no he didn't write, and he didn't come. I've heard—but it's not like him—I don't think as how he'd that power to love in him—but they do say it was not the estate as tempted him—but some lady—some beautiful, beautiful lady, as both brothers was fond of. Oh, my gracious! how pale you do look—bless my heart I hope it was'n't you as was that lady. Sure and certain but you're beautiful enough!"

Lady Emma, making a violent effort, says faintly: "Go on—finish your story—pray—pray go on."

Old woman—"Not much more—It's coming to an end. The Captain heard upon that nasty continent where he was as how his father was ill, and off he starts—and first all wild with sorrow—for his father, mind—for he knows nothing, guesses nothing of how it goes about the estate—first, he comes to London house, and Mr Aubrey not there—and then down he rushes here—his heart all brimful—honest, good, loving heart as it was, with sorrow, and penitence, and repentance, for having brought his father to this pass!—And oh! what a face it was as I met when he

came into this house—the face of an angel as had gone astray—and there he was, all humbling himself, in sorrow and tears like a little child—so humble!—and yet so open, brave and manly too—a man's—a brave man's sorrow because he'd been wrong—and a good, loving child's very great grief, because it was his father he'd vexed so with that swelling heart of his all full, he goes right to Mr Aubrey's bed-side, but oh! how cruelly did that old man behave. He *was* half mad with anguish of body and mind—no doubt—for his body was one rack of pain, and no sleep o' nights—none at all—and his eyes all red, flaming, and dry with anger and fever—and so what he said I know not. I stood in the passage, but too far off to hear the words. I heard the father speak in harsh loud tones—I did not think there'd been the strength in him to speak so—and presently I sees the son—that's Edward!—with his hair on end like the fiend himself—quite mad—dash by and out of the house—and plunge—plunge it was—and the waters covered him. I did not hear the plunge, but I heard *of* it. . . . They tried to hush the matter up. They said as how it was a slip—it was

a slip *headlong*—Head foremost downwards over the cliff and into the sea—the deep—deep sea.”

There was silence. The old woman said no more—Emma sat the mute picture of horror.

How long they remained, these two women, cold and silent both, with eyes fixed before them, I know not.

The blast roared, and a heavy storm of rain beat furiously against the window-panes, and the loud voice of the ocean was heard rising above the storm.

At last Lady Emma rose shivering from her chair—“Let me go to bed,” she said, “Call somebody—Let me go to bed. . . .”

“Yes, Elliott, put lights—Two candles—four candles—Leave them burning—and now go—go to bed—open the curtain a little—how it lightens—close it again—close it quite close. Don’t let me keep you up any longer, you must be so tired—Go to bed.”

“Pray don’t send me away, my Lady—

You look so poorly. I'm not tired, indeed. Pray, pray, let me sit by you till you get to sleep."

"Will you?—Are you not very tired—Oh! I should be so glad. Not by me, but by the fire—I like to have you in the room. How it *does* lighten—and what horrible thunder-claps—but don't be afraid—God is everywhere. Is not God everywhere?—Shall you be comfortable in that arm chair?—It is very good of you to stay."

CHAPTER XIII.

Man's peace is founded on majestic truth,
Enlightened conscience, hope and faith breathed prayer,
And they who seek it in hoared age or youth,
Yearn for God's Holy One to guide them there.

MONTGOMERY.

It was impossible for her to close her eyes.

The storm was furious. The wind howled, and the waves roared; and the lightnings flashed blazing into the room, though the curtains were closed; and the crashing of the thunder—that awful rending, crackling, and pealing, as if the very heavens were being burst asunder, was followed by hail—hailstones large as pebbles—mingling with the torrents of rain.

It was indeed a fearful night.

But the horror within her own heart it was that kept her lying there pale and immovable—scarcely listening to the tempest without—the death within was far more dreadful.

A horrible suspicion had been aroused, and her faith in all things upon earth seemed shaken.

It is an awful feeling when that solid earth upon which we walk, fixed as it appears to us upon its foundation, firmly as the everlasting hills, reels and rolls under our feet like the unstable sea, with the heavings of an earthquake ; but far more terrible is the moment when, deceived in one whom we implicitly trusted, our very faith in human nature gives way.

Under the influence of this dreadful feeling the soul is all bewildered and giddy, and the sense of universal instability is awful.

So he felt that night as if the very pillars of faith in everything above and around her were shaken to their very foundations.

Could it be possible?—could William Aubrey have been a dishonourable traitor—the worst of traitors—a domestic traitor?

William ! whom she had looked upon as in worth and integrity something almost more than mortal,—William ! whom, perhaps, she could not altogether love, but whom she esteemed from the bottom of her heart—that he should

have proved base and false—have swerved under temptation—have forsaken his brother!—and oh! what a brother!—have deserted him in his utmost need! basely supplanted him, allowed himself basely to supplant him!—Tempted by the hoped-for possession of an estate!—and oh! horror of horrors! the possession of herself!

He did not indeed know the whole truth of the story—no one knew it—the generous devotion of Edward was a secret to all—but this, at least, should be a secret no longer.

But why, though ignorant of his brother's full justification—why was he not there? to plead for such a man and such a brother, at such a time? He might have doubted—he ought to have doubted, his guilt. He ought to have urged things in his exculpation—to have insisted upon his father's sentence being suspended—have refused to profit by his brother's disgrace—for all who knew Edward, as he did, ought to have felt certain that sooner or later he would clear himself from the imputation under which he laboured . . . at all events William ought to have forced

his father to wait at least until Edward had been heard.

Poor Edward ! He came, no doubt, to justify himself, by declaring the truth, and he could not even get a hearing from his exasperated father—exasperated by whom ?

And then there arose such a confusion of mingled feelings of rage, contempt, and despair ; natural enough—poor creature ! to her undisciplined fervent nature.

Poor creature !—dear creature !—abandoned to yourself, to your warm strong heart—your quick perception of wrong, with your vehement, passionate soul trusting in self—like Paul before the awful vision awakened him to life and light.

Oh ! who will speak to you the divine words—that Gospel of peace and forgiveness teaching pity for the sinner, amid abhorrence of the sin—and soothing the agonies of that wild, raging heart by inculcating compassion for the tempted, and sympathy with the fallen ?

There is a more vivid flash—a more terrific roll, clatter and crackle of the thunder—a more violent burst of hail, wind, and rain—and the cry of a child faintly heard.

She started up—

“ Oh I had forgotten her!—I had forgotten everything!—Bring her to me, she is frightened poor little thing—well she may be. Fetch her, Elliott—bring her to my bed.”

“ Come to me! come to me! my crying, innocent child,” as the little trembling girl clinging to her nurse’s neck, almost beside herself with terror, was brought in—

“ Come to me!—come to me!—my innocent!—my sweet one! Come to your poor mammy, my baby!”

The child sprang to her arms, and nestled to her bosom shivering and shuddering. And, the poor, young mother was shivering and shuddering like a little child herself—and those two clung to each other, for they loved so, that comfort visited their hearts, in spite of the horrors of the night;—and gradually the storm of anguish and terror subsided, and they fell asleep in each others arms.

Then Elliott gently stepped to the bedside

to draw the curtain, and there they lay,—that beautiful young mother, and that beautiful young child.

She, with all the abundance of her golden waves of hair scattered over pillow, cheek, and bosom, her face still marked with the lines of deepest sorrow, and slightly tinted with the fever of excitement, leaning her cheek upon the head of that little slumbering girl—who nestled against her heart, warm, sheltered, and happy, sleeping in profoundest peace; the beautiful white slender arms of the young mother clasped closely round—to her, a safe defence, and shield.

The lady's maid stood looking at them a little while, with a tenderness and emotion, that made her own heart the better; then, she softly drew the curtain, and stole back to the fire, and reseated herself in the comfortable arm chair, listening to the fading echoes of the now retreating storm, till she too dozed into forgetfulness, and slept till daybreak.

How beautiful is the morning after such a storm!

Is not the creation of God a great book of hieroglyphics, where we may read His truth in the image, language?

And may not this sweet, soft, shining of the morning, succeeding some awful night-storm—when nature, as it were washed and purified by the tempest, meets the sun like a bride freshly adorned—may it not fitly represent that far brighter morning which shall arise, when the saints, clothed in white robes, who have passed to the kingdom of heaven through much affliction, shall stand pure and bright, before the throne of the Lamb of God?

The day broke fresh, and glittering. Every leaf and spray hung with drops, that glistened in the rays of an early unclouded sun. The air felt so pure, and exhilarating, that Elliott opened the window wide, and let in the gentle, reviving breeze, upon that broken, wearied, unhappy Lady Emma.

Sleep had refreshed her, however, and when first she unclosed her eyes, and saw that little

one still slumbering in her bosom, she, who had forgotten for the moment what had passed—wondered why her heart felt so heavy.

Then she bent her head and kissed the child, and the little girl opened her eyes—looking so like William!

And at this, recollection returned, and that terrible instant came, when after a deep forgetful sleep, we first recollect the awful event that has happened, and which has changed all of life around us, for ever.

She stared wildly into the child's eyes for one moment, then with a shudder unclasped her arms, and turning suddenly away, flung herself upon the opposite pillow—her face the picture of despair.

She felt as if she should never love her child again as she had done, for it was *his* child also.

But that anguish was but momentary. The mother's love is stronger than death—far stronger than anger. Better feelings returned. Startled at her own violence, she drew the little one towards her, smothering it with kisses, as if to make

amends for the involuntary injustice, murmuring in her heart the while, "No, no, sweet one, it is not your fault. . . . Poor dear!—poor dear! I will love you for ever and ever. I may, and I must love *you!*"

When Emma at last rose from her bed, that happened to her which usually happens in such cases to all—the excited feelings of the night lost something of their intensity, and things assumed a calmer and graver aspect.

The horrible agony of distress in which she had been struggling was in a degree abated, and—those vague, passionate accusations against her husband assumed a less positive and a very diminished form. She began to question herself as to the justice of her suspicions—to perceive that after all they were but suspicions, taken up without examination, from mere hints dropped by the old woman, and might be altogether groundless—and that the intensity of her feelings had been much aggravated by the piteous story of Edward's fate.

As she went on dressing—going through

that ordinary, indispensable routine of life, so wholesome to the excitable, vibrating, nervous temperament of many men, and most women—these more reasonable ideas gained upon her. She felt very, very heavy at heart, and looked with a repugnance almost sickening upon the things around her, as upon possessions most fearfully obtained; but she began to hope that William would be able to explain things, so as to justify himself from anything approaching to treachery—she felt that she would have given worlds to find that her husband had come forward as the generous advocate of his brother's cause, as he ought to have done, till she began to hope that so he must have done.

She came down to breakfast, looking pale and wan, and anxious it is true, but not so utterly wretched as she had done the preceding night.

Breakfast over, she put on her bonnet and cloak, and walked out, feeling low and unhappy, but somewhat more at ease. Elliott asked her if she would not please to bathe. The bathing-houses lay at the foot of the hill up which the carriage road ascended to the

top of the cliff; they stood in front of a small, scattered village, which ran along the beach.

“No,” Emma said, “she did not feel inclined to bathe.” Her little girl stood at the top of the stairs, in her straw hat and little cloak, holding nurse’s hand, preparatory to going a walking; she was peeping down, hoping mama would take her out with her; but the pre-occupied young mother never looked up, and opening the door issued forth, leaving the disappointed little Imogene to nurse.

Emma was panting to get out alone—quite alone, and if possible, to find her way, unobserved, to the edge of those cliffs from which Edward had fallen into the sea.

She hastily passed through the little garden, and came upon the short, thick grass, where wild thyme, and pink thrift, and other sea-side turf plants were growing upon the downs that spread in beautiful outline around her; but she saw nothing of this. Her eyes were bent upon that green line against the ocean which marked the abrupt termination of the land. To that she turned her steps, walking impatiently on. She reached the precipice,

the wind ushered in the rising tide waving her white dress and black scarf, and the ribbons in her straw hat, as she thus passed along.

Having reached the edge of the cliff, she looked down upon the dizzy precipice below. It was almost perfectly perpendicular, and the water came up close to the face of the chalk, leaving not the smallest foot-breadth of sand between it and the waves, which here seemed very deep.

She shuddered as she looked down upon the green, transparent depths, now heaving with the coming tide—the waves with their white crests rising and falling in monotonous succession, chasing each other against the precipice, where they broke with a hollow sound.

The sun shone bright upon the waters, and snowy sea-birds were soaring or floating in the air—now stooping and dipping their light wings in the waves—now rising and settling on the peaks of the cliffs. A small vessel with sails full set, was scudding before the wind, and was able, such was the depth of water, to approach so near the shore that she could easily distinguish the men on

board, in their tarred jackets and scarlet caps. There was not, in fact, a single fragment of broken rock or breaker to prevent a vessel of even yet larger size nearing the land more closely.

The influence of this lovely ocean scene was soothing.

She sat down, and pensively gazed upon the beautiful picture before her, indulging a somewhat pleasing melancholy, and that sort of unacknowledged hope that all is not for ever over, which steals upon us, even when the dead lie motionless before our eyes, and yet more when we only hear that they are gone.

That child, and that story of the extraordinary man in Egypt!—that Bey!—the able, the benevolent, and the thoughtful man—but it could not be—from that very cliff he had flung himself.

The waters before her, alas! were deep enough—aye, ten-fold deep enough—to bury him. She looked into them and shuddered.

And in this manner she passed several days; sometimes walking slowly upon the edge of the cliffs, as nearly as possible to the land line; sometimes sitting upon the turf, and

gazing upon the sea. One is never wearied of watching the sea; and that wide, heaving expanse—that picture of infinite strength in repose when the ocean is at peace, soothed her, as it has soothed many an aching heart before hers.

She continued steadily to refuse Elliott's invitations to bathe, nor would she leave the downs. Her horses stayed idly in the stable—her poor little longing girl went out with nurse alone.

After a few days, however, Emma began to extend her walks, for at first she had gone but a very little way. She found that upon this side the downs gradually rose in height, and the cliffs became here and there turfy peaks, broken sheer off towards the sea line, and becoming steeper and loftier, as you advanced along the coast.

One day Emma had walked far, led on as one is in such a scene, by the desire to scale the highest point in sight. She reached this point at last, which she found jutted out into the sea—terminating in a high precipice, and commanding the whole coast line which she had passed over.

It makes one giddy to look down such precipices, and she felt her head beginning to turn, so she retreated a little way, and, looking round, became aware of a small cottage, built of heath and turf, in front of which, standing a few paces from the edge of the cliff, with a spy-glass to his eye, stood a man in a sailor's jacket.

She felt tired and thirsty, and dying for a glass of water, for the day was hot, and she had walked a considerable distance—so she accosted the man, making some remark upon the beauty of the scene; and then asked whether that was his cottage, and whether she could have a little water.

The sailor answered courteously, and was putting down his spy-glass in order to accompany her to the hut, but she begged that he would not do so—for said she, “You seem to be rather anxiously watching something at a distance.”

“It is the *Imperieuse*, Ma'am, coming up channel,” the man replied—“a three-decker—and one of the finest ships in her Majesty's service. Would you like to take a peep, Ma'am? there, do you see?—all sails set.

The very skyscrapers spread—coming up like a queen as she is, with wind and tide full in her favour. It's a sight for a king, let alone a queen, isn't it?—Here, Nancy," calling to a woman who now showed herself at the door of the cabin—"Fetch the lady a glass of water. Wouldn't you like just a taste of spirits in it, madam?—has paid the Queen her dues, I'll insure you, I being one of the coast guard."

Lady Emma (returning the spy-glass):
" No, thank you, only a drop of water. It is a beautiful sight, indeed!—And is that your house?—And do you spend all your day here upon the look-out? It must be fearfully windy and cold at times."

The Sailor: "There and here about, ma'am—and it is wild enough at times, for sure—but duty must be done. I have charge of the look-out easterly, as far as yon staff on the point below there—westerly as far as Eagle's cliff, or rather the little bathing village below it—which perhaps my lady comes from"—

Lady Emma: "From that neighbourhood.—Then you watch the whole extent of cliff in front of Mr Aubrey's Swiss cottage—I

have seen a sailor walking about there, appearing to have nothing to do—and could not think why he did so. I understand now.”

The Sailor: “The cliff in front of the Swiss cottage and there away, and down to the village of Creek—and sure enough, Creek it may be called—for Creek has been the making of it. The water that comes up there has been a famous run for smugglers.”

Lady Emma: “But you watched the cliff in front of the Swiss cottage, I think you said?”

The Sailor: “Not much to watch there away. He must be a clever fellow as landed a cargo in front of that cottage. Why them cliffs are as steep as a brick-wall—but you see, Miss, a vessel can come very close in shore all about there, and lie snug—and run a cargo at her ease, except one keeps a sharp look-out, in that same little bay.”

Lady Emma: “And have you been long upon this station?”

The Sailor: “I’m no chicken, Miss,—I’ve been on this station since I served in that same Imperieuse—bless her, how she *does* come it. Now take a look through the glass, do—That’s

what I call a beauty. Only see the way that vessel comes up channel."

Emma takes the glass and looks, and still holding it, says—"How long have you been coast-guard upon this station, did you say?"

The Sailor: "A matter of fifteen years next Martinmas."

Lady Emma: "Fifteen years—fifteen years—then"—with a sort of trembling eagerness in her voice—"then you were here August 18—Seven years and more ago."

The Sailor: "Was I? aye, for sure I was—Well, if that Imperieuse don't beat the finest three-decker in her Majesty's navy, call me a landsman—that's all."

Lady Emma: "Then, perhaps, you know something of a terrible accident that happened—a—a—young gentleman—that slipped from the cliff, and was—was—was—drowned."

The Sailor: "Do you mean—about Captain Aubrey? Aye, aye—sure enough. I saw that accident—as you are pleased to call it, Miss—Slipped from the cliff! A likely matter in a seaman like him to *slip* from a cliff. No—no—there was no slipping, I take it. I saw it all, and understand well enough how

it was; but they never said anything to me about it, so I waited till I was asked."

Lady Emma sat down upon a little bench of board that stood near, and held her two hands tightly across her breast; and she sat there as if endeavouring to recover breath to speak again, whilst the old man kept spying through his glass. At last she got up again, and came nearer, and, speaking low, said,—

"You saw it all, you say. How near were you? Tell me all about it, I beg of you."

The old Sailor: "I might have been some hundred yards away; and I was standing just so, at the edge of the cliff, holding my glass as it may be in my hand—looking into it—for something was the matter with one of the glasses; and I wanted to watch a schooner which was lying a little out at sea, and seemed to be making for the bay, —when bang, like a flash of lightning, I sees the young man—Captain Aubrey, as I afterwards learned it was—without his hat; and his hair all on end as you may say. It seemed to me as if it was standing straight upright—and he, looking like a man out of

his mind, possessed with the demon—or, more like, pursued by the demon ; and I sees him one moment at the edge of the cliff, as if he stopped a fifteenth part of a second to look before him—and then bang, head foremost into the sea—just at high-water mark.”

Lady Emma : “ And what did *you* do ? What did you do ? ”

The old Sailor : “ Dropped my glass and ran for the place, as if for very life.”

Lady Emma : “ And you saw nothing.”

The old Sailor : “ Miss, it’s an odd thing for a sailor ; but I haven’t a very good sight without my glass—and I uses my glass at a different length from another man. . . . Just as I was getting to the spot, I bethought me of my glass, and ran back for that, because in my trouble I forgot that I couldn’t use it in the condition it was ; and so someway or other it was some little time before I got to the very place—and sure enough, when I did get there, I saw the mark of his foot upon the grass—with a slither like—as if one might ha’ slipped, but he didn’t ; and ”

Lady Emma : “ But you looked down—you looked out—you said there was a ship not far off. . . . Well, go on— go on. . . . ”

The old Sailor : “ There was a ship, sure enough ; but it must have been a good swimmer that could have reached *that*. I *did* fancy, when I looked hard, that I saw something brown — a-bobbing — and a-bobbing among the waves ; but I could not see clear. It might have been a heap of sea-tang, or a waif in the water. I looked hard at the ship ; but I could see nothing distinct-like. So then I turned to the house—that same Swiss Cottage there—for I didn’t *then* guess it was our Captain. Oh, he was a rare fellow if ever there was one ! So, as I was saying, I ran to the house, and there I found all in confusion ; for the old gentleman was lying dead. And so it seems, the Captain was not missed at first, and nobody to hear my story. At last the old gardener comes, and he hears what I have to say ; and so we go to the place, but all we could see there was the slip upon the grass, like—”

Lady Emma (trembling very much) : “ And the ship !—The ship ! ”

The old Sailor : “ The schooner, did you mean ? Why, she was cleared away, and making for the offing.”

Lady Emma : “ And couldn’t he—was not

it possible that a man might have swum to that ship?"

The old Sailor: "Might!—Might! It would be a good swimmer as did—Might! Yes, I won't say but he might; but I don't suppose as he *did*; for not one syllable, as I'm told, has ever been heard of him since.—So poor fellow, I suppose he was drowned—and that was a pity, for there was not a more gallant young officer in her Majesty's fleet, let the other be who he might."

Lady Emma: "You did see something brown. You said it might have been the head of a man swimming. . . ."

The Sailor: "It was a pity I hadn't my glass.—I see so bad without my glass—with it I can see a gull's feather a league off. Yes, there was a something—and at first I *did* believe—that it might be him swimming to the schooner."

Lady Emma: "And did you tell no one what you thought—What you had seen?"

The Sailor: "Why, Miss, to tell the truth, I was afraid of being brought before the Crowner. A man never knows what scrape he may get into if he gets near a lawyer, like.

So I held my peace, and kept off that side of my beat for one while, though no Crowner sat, after all—and, moreover, nobody from that day to this ever asked Jack Alcock a word, bad or good, about it. But you look very oddly, Miss. *Do* take a little drop of the right thing—You look fit to swoon away. Was you his sweetheart, if one may be so bold?”

Lady Emma: “No—no—no. What are you talking about? Good morning,” putting money into his hand. “It is time to be going home.”

“But,” said the good old Sailor, looking compassionately at her, “You’re not fit, Miss, to walk home. You look as if you could hardly stand. And yet your face is all of a glory like—and yet you seem bad. *Do* take a drop of summut—*do*.”

“No—no—no,” getting up and walking, or rather tottering, homewards.

“You can’t go alone—Indeed, Miss, you mustn’t. Let my wife—she’s a good old body—give you an arm—Heigh, Nancy! Put on your traps as quick as you can, and lend this young lady a hand home.”

CHAPTER XIV.

. . . . Like that of this wild blast,
Which, while it makes the heart with sadness shrink,
Tells also of bright calms that shall succeed.

WORDSWORTH.

HER face was, as the old man said, in a glory of joy, and yet she felt as if she could hardly breathe.

With much difficulty, assisted by the good woman, she got home. But that was all she could do —Speak to any one—look at any one, seemed impossible. She crept upstairs to her room, hurriedly undid her dress, set loose that swelling beating heart of hers, put on her dressing gown, flung herself upon the bed, and abandoned herself to a tumult of joy, that seemed stifling her.

Too big, too vast, to be contained within that heart, which seemed actually bursting.

Hearts have burst so.—But she was young,

and nature was strong, and by and by the violent palpitation subsided, and she had power to endure this rapture of extasy.

And then she lifted up her eyes to God.

She wanted some one to thank—She must be grateful to some one—and she lifted up her honest, loving, grateful spirit to God—And thanked that unknown God, of whom she had so little been taught to think, for his great and unspeakable mercies.

Others might doubt—she doubted no longer.—He had not rushed to suicide because he had lost his father's favour, and with it his worldly goods and estate.—No!—an injured man—his heart swelling with a sense of injustice—he had plunged into the element he loved, and been borne far away to other climes, leaving for ever the ungrateful family his deeds had illustrated.

There is an intuition of faith which rarely deceives and never is mistrusted—from that hour Emma was convinced that Edward lived.

One difficulty alone presented itself, when she considered the matter more coolly—Why, if Edward had lived, had he preserved this invincible silence as regarded his brother?

He used so to love his brother.

And then those dark suspicions of a wrong upon William's part again returned, and her joy was clouded over !—Poor thing !

Alas ! a few days more, and all was made clear.

WILLIAM AUBREY to EMMA.

Haughton Hall.

My dearest—

Your letters are brief, and though you make no complaints, I can plainly see that you do not write in spirits. You know I did not think your plan of going to the Swiss Cottage a very promising one. The place I always thought rather gloomy, so buried as it is in trees. But it is now so thronged with memories most painful to us all, that to me, at least, the very idea of it is insupportable. You say you shall soon return home—in which case, unless you have any particular reason for desiring it should be otherwise, I purpose to let the above property, which

lies inconveniently distant from us here—and which *I*, at least, shall never visit again.—So, my dearest, if you agree with me in this, will you be so very kind as to give orders that such things as may happen to remain there, and which ought not to pass into other hands, may be set aside, with any little articles of furniture which you might fancy to keep, and, perhaps, the pictures—for I propose to let it furnished, as it stands. There are some clothes of my poor father's, I believe, that I have not had the spirits to give orders about—they should be looked over, and given away to the servants or to the poor;—and in one of his waistcoat pockets there is, I have reason to think, the gold pencil-case he habitually used, and which I should wish to have myself. I am ashamed to give you so much trouble, but shall be relieved of a burden when it is done.—The place is abhorrent to me.

“Your devoted husband,

“W. A.”

“P.S.—I am going upon business to Scotland for a few days.—May I hope to find you at Haughton upon my return?”

“Will you please,” said Lady Emma to the old woman, “to bring the keys of the drawers standing in the late Mr Aubrey’s room? I think there are no others in the house that are locked. I conclude that it is there that you put away your master’s things. It is the present Mr Aubrey’s intention to let the house and furniture, and he wishes all such matters as ought to be cleared away to be looked over whilst I am here, so that they may be properly disposed of. Please to look out the clothes, and tell me what there is, and I will give you orders about the dividing of them. And be so good as to search in the pockets of the waistcoats—Mr Aubrey thinks that his father’s gold pencil-case will be found in one of them, and he very much wishes to have it.”

The old servant obeyed, and soon afterwards returned, saying—

“There is the inventory of the late Mr Aubrey’s things, my lady, and in the pocket of his black velvet waistcoat the pencil-case was found—this is it—I have seen my poor master use it hundreds of times. It has a head engraved as a seal at the top; which

my master once told me belonged to the best and greatest man that he knew of—King Alfred. This,” she said, pointing to a morning travelling dress that hung over her arm, “does not belong to my old master; I don’t know how it got huddled in among his clothes—but we were all in sore confusion at that time. I think it must belong to Mr William Aubrey. There seems to be something in the breast-pocket, but I did not put my hand in, having no orders.”

Emma was looking over the inventory.

“I dare say—lay it down, if you please—I will have it packed with my things and taken back—as I have no directions concerning it.”

And then she proceeded to go over the inventory with the old servant, marking with her pencil the initials of the different persons to whom she thought the clothes should be given.

She was not at all sorry to have the Swiss cottage disposed of; she never wished to visit it more. All that had passed since she came there seemed to her like a confused dream—she was become impatient to get away—she fancied that once out of the

ceaseless sound of those restless waves against the rocks she should be able to arrange her thoughts: to look at things in their true light; and compose the disorder of spirits, which seemed to take away her power to think—or know what she ought to think.

So she glanced round the room as her husband had desired, to see whether there was any little article of ornament or so that she should wish to retain, or that he might like to keep possession of.

But there seemed to be nothing.

There was nothing to remind her of Edward, but a small garden spade, which had been preserved with the tradition attached to it that the Captain had used it when a boy. It used to stand in a corner of the little sitting room—this she ordered to be packed up; and then she examined the pictures.

She was not the least judge of pictures. They all seemed to her very clever; some very ugly and some rather pretty; but she could not pretend to make a selection; it would be better to have them all packed up and sent to Haughton; and William could do what he pleased about them.

Then she rang for her maid and said—

“Elliott, I intend to return to Haughton to-morrow : Do you think little Missy will be able to go through in one day?—I hate to sleep upon the road if I can possibly avoid it!”

“If my lady takes a special train, there can be no doubt but we might get through—and Missy, I think, will bear it quite well. My young lady sleeps so nicely in a carriage.”

“Ask nurse about it—Give orders for a special train to-morrow, and pack up my things.”

“Stay—there is this coat of your master’s—you may as well put it up with the rest—Oh ! I forgot, give it me again—Mrs Beer told me there was something in the breast pocket she thought—put your hand in—is there anything ?”

“Only a purple morocco letter case, my lady.”

“Give it me, I will lock it up in my writing desk—you may go now—Ah ! my darling are you there ?”—as little Imogene appeared with her nurse at the casement; her little pinafore full of shells and sea-weed.

“I want to get in, Mammy”—cried the

little girl, trying to clamber in through the window — “Push, nurse dear — help me, mammy, I have got such beauty sea-weeds.”

Children love to scramble in by windows, rather than walk in by doors, we all know—the little one kept clambering up, assisted by the branches of the creepers. The young mother laughed.

“You will hurt you bonny little legs,” she said, “Stay—stay, take hold of my hands.”

The letter case dropped upon the floor, as the little one, assisted by her mammy, struggling and laughing, at last contrived to tumble in.

The first operation was to jump round her mother’s neck, and give her a good sounding kiss and kisses, whilst all the hoard of sandy sea-weeds tumbled out of her little frock upon the ground.

“Oh dear, dear, my sea-weeds—my beauty sea-weeds.”

They had fallen in a considerable heap over the letter case—The young mother was upon her knees in an instant, helping her little girl to pick up her treasures.

“Put ’em in my frock—put ’em in my

frock, please"—holding out the stained skirt to receive them.

"Oh you untidy little puss—why does not nurse make you take a basket?—There—there—It can't be made worse now—Why what a heap of rubbish the child has picked up—and oh dear!—your papa's letters and letter case—all wet and dirtied."

She picked them up without looking at them—calling to nurse out of the window.

"Nurse, come and take this little sloven away—Put her on a clean frock and the seaweeds in a basket, and then let her come and show them to me—You untidy little thing—look what a mess your papa's letters and letter case are in."

The nurse fetched the child, and Lady Emma took up her cambric handkerchief, which lay unfolded upon the table, and began hastily to brush the sand from the morocco case.

She then tried to rub the dirty stains from the first letter, and restored it to its place; then she took up a second. The envelope of this was torn—the letter itself fell into her hand.

The handwriting!—

The first words!—

“ I conjure you by all the love we ever bore each other . . . ”

There was no time for thought, she tore the letter open and read it through—every word of it!—to the signature—“ Edward Aubrey.”

Almost fiercely she turned again to the first page, and found the date—“ July the 25th ”—ten days before Mr Aubrey had died. She snatched up the envelope, which had fallen to her feet. The London post-mark was upon it—July the 24th—six days before Mr Aubrey had died.

She clenched the letter in her hand. She raised her hands above her head—she stamped with her foot. Her face was all changed. It was an agony of rage and despair.

“ He knew—he knew—he did know ! He has known it all this time—time—time—all that Algernon said to me . . . He has known it all this time, and he has never told it—never righted his brother’s memory ! Stolen his inheritance—stolen his love—stolen his good name ! Oh wretch !—wretch !—wretch that I am !—what shall I—shall I do ? ”

The door opened, the little girl stood at it, with her basket full of sea-weeds in her hand. She was in a clean white frock, her little face shining like the morning, her hair combed nicely round her face—holding her basket of sea-weed in her hand—her pretty dark expressive eyes lifted to her mother.

“ I ’m come—now, mama.”

“ Take her away, nurse—take her away—Oh those eyes ! those eyes ! how fearfully like ! Take her away ! ”

The poor child lifted up a face of dismay to her mother ; all the sunshine of the little countenance gone.

That her good heart could not stand.

She rushed forwards—caught the child in her arms.

“ No, no—go away, nurse—go away. No, no, no—It ’s not your fault, my little love—my little darling. Don’t cry—don’t cry. I can ’t help crying ”—for rage had melted into a passion of tears. “ But don’t you cry, my darling ! don’t you cry.”

And so she sank down upon the ground, pressing her child to her breast—the little arms clasped close round her neck —and

burst forth into torrents of tears, joined by the now weeping little girl, and rocking and swaying to and fro—as if to comfort both at once.

The letter carried but too certain evidence of what had passed. The intelligence of his father's illness had reached Edward abroad, at a remote place, where he was himself confined to his bed by an accident—a blow upon the head.

As soon as he heard of his father's danger, he felt that it was impossible to delay the explanation which he had always intended to make when his father's wrath against the real offender was somewhat abated. To suffer his father to die under this horrible misapprehension, as to the extent of his own fault was impossible. He thought nothing of his inheritance—scarcely even of his betrothed. He thought only of setting himself right with the father he so loved and honoured, before that father died.

He would have instantly returned to England for the purpose; but this his medical attendant imperatively forbade—he had

therefore no resource left but to write to William, which he did, in the most affecting terms—beseeching him to prepare the way for his return—and to explain with all the caution he could use, so that Lord Algernon might not be brought into jeopardy, the real state of the case—and not to allow his father—his affectionate, partial father, to suffer one day longer under this horrible misapprehension. “I think if he were to die before I had recovered his esteem, I should never get the better of it. Write,” he went on, “write to me here. When I can travel I know not—tell me that all is as it should be—that I may come home.” . . .

The prayer of the letter, it is plain, had not been fulfilled.

William had received it, there could be no doubt; but he had not flown with it to his father’s bedside, as every law of truth and honour demanded. No, wretch—wretch—he had kept it back! His father had died with a curse on his lips, and Edward had been driven to despair. The exact particulars of the history she could not know. One thing only was certain—William *had* received the letter.

Yes, it was but too true William *had* received the letter, and through it had entered into a dire temptation.

That letter would reverse the whole order of things—that letter would restore Emma to her first lover. *There* lay the temptation. It was not the estate—it was but as regarded Emma, that he cared for the estate—as it regarded that hope of unspeakable felicity in which he had but for a few weeks indulged.

Oh it was a sore temptation ! yet he did not intend to yield to it. Oh no, that be far from him—he would not yield—he only hesitated, parleyed with the fiend—hesitated and faltered and delayed, to make the immense, immense sacrifice.

The letter had, after considerable delay, followed him to a distant place, where he was engaged in his father's affairs. He only lost some eight and forty hours—parleying with the fiend—tampering with his conscience—hesitating, before he triumphed over the temptation to commit a heinous wrong.

Shame — honour — everything that was man within him, conquered at last — but the hour was gone by.

He set forward at length—But he went, after all, reluctantly. He looked back to that tempting vision of forbidden delights—yet he *did* go on, but not straight forwards, rapidly and decisively, as he ought to have done.

And so—when he arrived at the Swiss cottage, all was over.

His father was dead — and his brother drowned in the deep, deep sea.

The agonies of his remorse were known but to himself. The first violence of self-reproach subsided in time—but the remembrance lay at his heart for ever. •

He strove to palliate matters between himself and himself—pleaded the greatness of the temptation, and that he had not yielded after all — he *had* conquered — and who would have thought — who could have expected—that so slight a delay . . .?—but the worm kept gnawing still.

Poor Edward! “Thus,” he would plead to

himself, "in this one point he was, it appeared, guiltless — but his love of gambling, the weakness . . . and instability of his character, could never have made Emma happy. The very manner of his death—though it was shuddering to think of, showed weakness, in its desperation and violence."

"Why did he not wait to know the truth?"

"Why did he not wait to explain?"—But the worm gnawed on.

William's cheek grew pale, his health declined, his spirits failed, sleep and appetite forsook him.

Yes, even with her! blest in her he adored, —finding her every hour more charming, more precious, more deservedly dear;—feeling that by degrees he was making a progress in her affections—the worm that never dies gnawed on.

But now the hour is arrived, which sooner or later comes to every man—frequently in

this life, but certainly in the next—the hour when all that is hidden shall be revealed, and everything that is covered known.

The bolt has fallen—retribution has begun, and William Aubrey's secret is betrayed to Emma.

How she bore the discovery, you partly know. She has been pictured to you at the opening of this story, on that beautiful terrace walk at Haughton—clothed with the utmost simplicity sitting there, spurning as it were with her foot, at the grandeur which encompasses her,—and in which she scorns any longer to share.

And what could she do more?

He has not yet returned home. He has been detained in Scotland—she must needs remain where she is, surrounded by the luxury so unworthily obtained, but the very heavens that stretch above, and the beautiful earth which spreads around her, are hateful in her sight.

She was scarcely more than a girl still— young, vehement, impetuous, and passionate, in her abhorrence of wrong. And this great

wrong had been done for her sake,—and will she enjoy the fruits of it?

Rather die.

She took it in her own strong way.

She had no one to advise or soothe her.

To touch, to taste or handle, what had been thus obtained!

She loathed the thought.

She laid aside all her rich and delicate clothing, of which she had been perhaps foolishly fond. She carried those diamonds, in which she had taken a young girl's pride, and all the pretty trinkets that her young fancy had found pleasure in; and went and locked them up in one of William's drawers in his dressing-room. Clearing her own of every vestige of superfluous ornament, as she would of some foul stain.

She would dine no longer from that service of silver gilt plate and china, peculiarly appropriated to her use when alone.

She would not touch one of the expensive little delicacies prepared by the *artiste* below. She resolutely refused everything but the simplest fare, and that brought up upon the ordinary household service. She did the same by her little girl. The richly worked and lace

trimmed frocks were every one of them laid aside. The simplest cotton dresses were all she was allowed to wear. The nurse mourned, but the child heeded not—she was too young for such nonsense—she was more than ever with her mother and was happy.

Whether Edward lived or not was doubtful—but living or dead, Emma would never profit by that of which he had been so treacherously deprived.

Perhaps he did still live—perhaps—oh blessed hope!—restitution might yet be made. In the mean time, touch what was rightly his—never would she do so more.

William's absence was unavoidably delayed for some weeks, during which, Lady Emma never once wrote to him. He was hurt at her silence; but no suspicion was awakened as to the cause of it.

Ever since Lord Algernon's letter, her fits of low spirits had been more frequent, and at the best of times, she was but an idle correspondent. He satisfied himself thus, and felt only the more impatient to return home. The business he was upon was tedious, but indispensable—he fretted at the delay; thus dimi-

nishing the small stock of health and spirits he still possessed. Feverish, nervous, languid, low—

At last he got through his task, and home he came.

CHAPTER XV.

. . . Vain are suppliant cries,
And prayers that would undo her forced farewell,
For she returns not.

WORDSWORTH.

SINCE her return from the Swiss cottage Emma had seen little of the housekeeper. Her dislike of Alice Craven had rather increased than diminished, and Alice returned this, and with interest. She had always affected to regard Lady Emma's proceedings with a certain contempt, as those of a capricious, inexperienced girl; but this last unaccountable conduct really seemed in some degree to warrant animadversions, which till then her conscience had not ceased to reproach her for, as built more upon prejudice and jealousy than upon any just foundation.

She, however, presumed not to remonstrate. But by a certain air of the head and expres-

sion of the lip, showed plainly enough what she thought of Lady Emma's behaviour—In fact, setting it down as merely a fresh instance of the caprices of a spoiled child.—“Spoiled,” as her expression was, “till she did not know what she would be at.”

Upon a certain morning, however, Mrs Craven found herself summoned to Lady Emma's dressing-room, and, when she entered, there was her young lady seated with an open letter before her.

“Mrs Craven, this letter is from your master—He will be at home to-morrow evening.”

Mrs Craven's usually gloomy face brightened.

“Will he?—I hope—I hope he is better, my lady.”

“Better!—I am not aware that I ever told you he was ill.”

“Ah! my lady—It needed no telling—I know him. Could I not know the child that has laid in my bosom better than anybody? Mr William was very poorly when he went away.”

“He does not mention his health in this letter,” said Emma, coldly. “I don't sup-

pose he does enjoy *remarkably* good health or spirits."

"No, Madam,—Not since he has come to live at Haughton Hall."

"Possibly ; but I wanted to give orders about a change I intend to make in the rooms. It is time Miss Aubrey should be taken out of the nursery. She is not yet old enough for a Governess. I intend to have her under my own care. Let Mr Aubrey keep his usual bed-room and dressing-room at the east wing. Prepare the bed-room and dressing-room at the end of the west wing for myself—I mean to occupy it, with Miss Aubrey."

"And leave my William ! . . . My master all to himself !" cried the astounded Alice.

"Just so. My first duties are to my child. No remonstrances if you please—they are out of place in your mouth, Mrs Craven ; and before Mr Aubrey returns, I may as well inform you at once—that I intend no longer to submit to the sort of censuring interference you have presumed once or twice to exercise with regard to my proceedings and the management of my family. Once for all, let

us have no more of such things, otherwise either you quit the house or *I*."

Mrs Craven's dark eyes flashed as she fixed them upon her mistress, who spoke with a decision that she had never assumed before; but Emma was wretched, and wretchedness makes us reckless of consequences. She cared little what became of her. The tone Mrs Craven assumed was more irritating to her than ever. She could bear it no longer, and she determined to speak out at last, and make an end of it.

"Yes," she went on—warming as she proceeded, for there was an expression of defiance in Mrs Craven's face that aroused all her spirit—"Yes, I have been patient too long; and I tell you once for all, and before your master returns, that I am resolved to be mistress, and sole mistress, in this house—and that I will allow no *controller* of either myself or my household here."

"You think yourself a very grand lady, no doubt," was the answer, in a strange, threatening, ironical tone.

Lady Emma turned her head away angrily, but disdaining to answer.

"You think great things of yourself, it

seems, because you are the daughter of a ruined Irish peer . . . and you look down upon your husband—the husband God has given you—I can see you do—and you make him wretched. Such a man as that to be made wretched ! and by the woman he would offer up his life for !—And now you are going to put the last stroke to your work, and to break his heart outright by your cruel caprices—But have a care !—mark my words—have a care ! ”

“ Have a care, and of what ? ” she cried, out of all patience—“ Leave the room and leave the house ! How dare you talk in this way to me ? ”

“ Leave the house !—Yes, if you will—for weary am I of it, and of all things. He will die, and then what shall I wish for but to die too ? There is one only that I loved—one thing only that I desired, and I would fain have stayed by him till all was over with him.”

“ I don’t want to send you away,” said Emma, somewhat startled and softened by the melancholy with which this last speech was delivered,—“ It is your own fault. If you would but behave as a servant ought to do—you might stay, but . . . ”

“As a servant!—Yes to be sure, and so I ought. Well, well, we little know what or where we are—we may be walking upon a mine!—who knows? It may explode some day or other, and then where may you and your child be blown to.”

Alas! thought poor Emma, it has already exploded; my life is shattered in irreparable ruin; but she only answered coldly,—

“I repeat what I before said,—If you will behave decently well, you may stay, if you please—at least till Mr Aubrey comes home.”

The next evening William returned.

He came into the room where Lady Emma was sitting by the fire, looking so extremely ill; so much thinner and worse in every respect than when they had parted, that she was very much shocked and affected; and she found it difficult at that first moment of reunion to adhere to the plan of systematic separation, which she had laid down for herself.

He entered with trembling eagerness; his face filled with that expression of deep sad-

ness, yet of excessive love with which he was ever accustomed to meet *her*—the one sole passion of his heart.

He spread out his arms, and would have clasped her to his bosom.

But she held back.

“No, Mr Aubrey,” she said, coldly extending her hand.

“Emma!—my Emma!—my love!—Emma!—What is this?—What is the matter?”

“Nothing but this — that things are changed since we parted . . . or rather, they are not changed—only I understand them better. But you look tired—will you have tea or coffee?”

*And she put her hand upon the bell.

“Don’t ring,” he said, turning very pale, and pulling open the breast of his travelling coat as he spoke,—“Give me a moment—a moment’s time to breathe—Emma!—Emma!—love!—Emma!”

A strange expression came over his face as he uttered the words, looking anxiously in her face, then starting forward, with sudden passion, “God in heaven!” he cried—he harshly seized her wrists, pressing them convulsively

as if in an iron vice—"What am I to understand, Madam, by this?—Whom have you seen?—Where have you been?—Some one has robbed me of your heart."

"Let go my hands, if you please. If you have any jealous injurious suspicions of my honour, I forgive you—Yes, some one has robbed you of my heart."

He stamped furiously with his foot, and squeezed her wrists as if he would have broken them.

"And that one is—yourself."

He let the wrists fall. The delicate arms were both black with the marks of his fingers. She looked down upon them, rather wonderingly than reproachfully. She seemed to feel no pain—to be past physical pain.

He stood like one transfixed before her, gazing into her face with fierce searching eyes.

"Emma—what *can* you mean?"

"Look into your own heart, and you will know well enough what I mean. There was a letter-case found belonging to you."

"Good Heavens—It *is* found!"

"Yes—it is found."

"And, you opened it?"

“It was opened owing to an accident.—
Two letters fell out.”

“And you read them?”

“Yes.”

“Then,” he cried, clasping his hand wildly over his forehead, “You know all—you have long seen—but now you *know* the accursed Cain before you.”

She made no answer.

He turned from her and took two or three hasty strides up and down the room, then he came back and looked at her as there she stood, for she had risen from her seat—there she stood, in his eyes, more extravagantly beautiful than ever—for, truly, she had been as it were sublimed by the mental agony she had gone through . . . she looked pale and jaded—but, oh, such an angel of truth and power!

Sadly and sadly he gazed—approaching her step by step—Then, suddenly, he snatched her to his breast—pressed a fevered, fiery kiss upon her forehead—let her go, and left the room.

He appeared no more that night.

He learned the arrangements that Lady Emma had made from Alice, whom he found

standing in his dressing-room when he entered his apartments. She also related, as he sat silently listening to her without the slightest interruption, all the strange proceedings, as she styled them, of his wife, since her return home.—To Alice they appeared the veriest extravagance of whim—but he too well understood their meaning.

“Don’t use such words in speaking of her, Alice,” he said, “let us beware of judging, for we are all sinners—And you above all should distrust yourself, for you estimate that creature most unjustly.—She has a noble heart—Yours is high, but it is not like hers—Did you say—to the very diamonds I had so much pride in giving her?”

“Yes, to every the least present you ever made her.—They are all in that drawer—here is the key.”

He received it, sighing heavily—went up to the drawer, looked in. There everything, to the very least trifle, lay arranged. He took up the little ornaments one by one—sadly remembering the fondness with which they had been given, and the girlish pleasure with which received. Every, the least object, was associated with some loved memory.

“She has not kept back one!—But she never loved me.”

“Aye—that was it—I saw it as soon as she entered this house—she never loved you.—Women who do not love their husbands are always whimsical, captious, and tyrannical.”

“Have done,” cried he, angrily. He felt as if he were in the coils of a serpent.

Alice saw she had gone too far, and continued more soothingly,—

“But time does wonders,—she may learn to love you at last—I have seen such things.”

“Time can do nothing for me.—I would like to be left to myself, Alice, if you please.”

The story draws to a conclusion.—

From this hour the history of William Aubrey was ended. He never recovered. He lingered some months, and might be seen wandering like the ghost of himself, about the shrubberies, the lawns, and greens of beautiful Haughton. He seldom spoke to any one. When he returned to the house he always retired to his dressing-room—it opened into what had been once Lady Emma’s bed-chamber.

He used to pass through that door; indeed, it was seldom closed, and would pace up and down the large and spacious apartment for hours together.

Appetite and sleep seemed entirely to have forsaken him. He wasted visibly—but he made no complaint; he never asked to see his wife. If he saw her at a distance he turned another way, if they accidentally met he made her a formal salute, and passed on.

She on her side maintained her attitude of cold and proud disdain, and obstinately adhered to the resolution not to make the slightest use of the fortune thus miserably obtained, except so far as to supply the merest necessities. And even these, she was making arrangements soon to provide for by the labour of her hands. She began to work indefatigably with her needle, though as yet she knew no means of disposing of the produce of her industry.

In the first moment of their meeting—or rather of their separation—her heart had melted towards him; but she had imposed it upon herself as a point of duty to resist what she thought a weakness. She believed that she ought not—and therefore she would

not, forgive him. The wrong was another's wrong—and he that was wronged was no longer there to pardon.

Such a course of things could not go on in a large house like Haughton and in a family holding the position of Mr Aubrey's, without numerous rumours, some false, some more or less true — getting afloat in the neighbourhood. Emma saw no one, ordering herself to be refused to every visitor. Mrs Birchell, the only person she would have admitted, was still from home, and she had not even her address, Grace and her husband having proceeded to the Continent after the convalescence of his mother, in order to spend the rest of the vacation in travelling—so there was nothing to give a diversion to her thoughts, or to point out what was mistaken in her feelings or actions.

She spent her time as I have described her at the opening of this story—walking with her little girl about the grounds, dressed in the plainest manner — hard, unforgiving, wretched! At times the melancholy figure

of her husband might be seen emerging from among the darkest and most secluded walks. If she had only watched him for a few minutes, she must have seen how feeble and wasted he was becoming; but she always turned her eyes away.

Sometimes she would chance to meet Alice, who kept her place in the family, in spite of all that had happened, and who glared upon her like a lioness, as she passed—but they never exchanged a syllable. Which of this wretched three was the most utterly wretched, it would be hard to say—he, with his slowly-breaking heart, savouring his misery drop by drop—dying by inches of remorse and of love most invincible and most unhappy—disgusted with life—without future hope or wish; only desiring to sink into the grave, to forget and be forgotten;—or she, so dreary, so desolate, so alone in her resentment, doing violence to herself to maintain, against the secret impulses of her better heart—that cold, unforgiving, behaviour;—or the wretched Alice, torn by desperate feelings which she dared not disclose, a prey to rage, disappointment, and an intolerable thirst for revenge.

At last Mrs Birchell returned home.

The Christian woman resumed her life of duty, with cheerful devotion and serenity of heart. Her's was that divine charity—*caritas*—that warm, expansive feeling extending from God to man, which we have no word to express in all its fullness—for the word, Love, seems to be but a faint expression of the whole generous meaning. That, which unites the warm enthusiasm for all that is good and great, with tenderest pity for the sinful and bad—thus filling up the pure outline of the genuine Christian character. Grace soon heard that things were not going on rightly at the Hall, and she hastened to visit her friend.

The servant who opened the door told her that his Lady now never saw any one.

“But I am sure she will see me,” said Mrs Birchell. “Pray let me come into the hall, at least, whilst you take up my name and inquire—I am certain Lady Emma will see me.”

“Walk in, Ma'am, then, if you please—but as to finding Lady Emma, I don't in the least know where she is. She has walked out, I suppose—my Lady almost lives out of doors.”

“ In the shrubberies? Do you think she is there? Then I will go and find her myself.”

The man would have made some objection, but Mrs Birchell decided the matter by crossing the hall, opening the glass door at the other end of it which led into the shrubberies, and at once making her way out.

She wandered about some time, meeting no one. The walks were intricate, and their twisting mazes measured many miles in extent, as they turned and returned upon each other. She had intended to go first to the terrace, hoping to find her friend in that her favourite walk; but she made a wrong turn, and soon found herself wandering along she knew not whither, among the thickest and most retired parts of the woods and plantations.

She proceeded hastily—now turning this way, now that, hoping to emerge from the leafy labyrinth; but the trees seemed only to grow the closer and the thicker as she went on.

At last, in one of the darkest parts of the walk—where, indeed, the sun and wind were so shut out by a dense wall of yew trees

and hollies, and by dark overhanging elms, that the air within was more like the sickly damp of an underground cave, than that belonging to the arched foliage of trees, she saw a figure moving slowly before her—it was that of a man, and, as she soon perceived, not of a workman, but of a gentleman, proceeding languidly along. She would have turned away, but there was no other path, and thinking there could be no harm in just passing by, she advanced, and, as she came nearer, discovered that it was Mr Aubrey—though looking so emaciated and moving so feebly, that she could scarcely believe that it could really be himself.

It was now too late to retreat, and she, intending to pass with a slight salutation, went straight on.

Hearing her footsteps, he turned, started, slightly raised his hat—and a wan smile passed over his face,—such a smile! So changed and sad, as she has often since declared would haunt her to her dying day.

His face was not merely pale—it was livid—the features sunk and wasted, almost to

the aspect of death itself! The deep, hollow eye alone seemed living; there was in it the light of a consuming fever.

Mary could not help starting, and the expression of her face when this spectral apparition met her eyes, was such that it touched him. He had been alone with his sufferings so long! His heart yearned, as the human heart *will* yearn for some little sympathy, some pity—his heart yearned as man's heart *will* yearn, for a woman's sympathy and pity.

He hesitated a moment, then came towards her, and held out his hand.

“Mrs Birchell!”

“Oh! Mr Aubrey,” she could not help bursting forth—“How ill you *do* look. Poor Lady Emma!—where is she?”

“You will find her in a more sunny part of the gardens. Poor Emma, indeed! But it will soon be over now—a short time more, and she will be released.”

“Released! my dear Mr Aubrey—what a word to use!” Then the recollection of the vague and unpleasant rumours she had heard came over her, and she added--“Lady Emma has a very kind heart.”

“So I believe, from the bottom of my soul,” he answered fervently.

“Your illness must be a great distress to her, poor thing—a great anxiety. . . .”

“Oh yes—certainly—You will find her on the terrace,” and touching his hat, he passed on.

She looked after him wistfully. She longed to follow and say more—to whisper a few words of comfort—but she was withheld by that barrier, that cold icy barrier which too often separates us from each other in this world of weakness and sorrow, harshly averting the hand that longs to aid—the heart that pants to speak comfort.

Mrs Birchell was brave as she was kind. She would have done much—anything, to be of use; but thus to break through the conventional customs which lay between her and Mr Aubrey—to force upon him her pity—perhaps her counsel—invite him from that helpless wretchedness, to a sense of better things—refresh his soul with the living waters—soothe him with her woman’s love and pity, and pillow that fainting head upon her arm—the world and its customs forbade.

She could do nothing for him.

Yet she kept watching him, with those compassionate woman's eyes of her's, till he disappeared in the windings of the walk, and she then turned and hastened forwards to seek for Lady Emma. She followed the direction of the sun, which must lead sooner or later to that western terrace, and she was more fortunate than she had been before. The heavy leafy arches over head became gradually lighter, the sun's rays played and glistened upon the grass, a few turns more, and she found herself upon the long terrace, and at some distance discovered Lady Emma sitting there, engaged in working at her needle, with her little child playing at her feet.

CHAPTER XVI.[†]

Ah! when the frame round which in love we clung
Is chill'd by death—does mutual service fail?
Is tender pity then of no avail?

WORDSWORTH.

THE young lady seemed so intent upon what she was about, that she never lifted up her head. The profile of her countenance was alone visible; it was very pensive and very sad; betraying much sorrow, and a mind brooding upon painful thoughts.

She sat upon a low wooden seat, sewing indefatigably, and never once looking at the little child upon the grass before her—who indeed, poor infant, seemed, as some one says—to have ‘caught the trick of grief, and sighed among its playthings.’

The day was a lovely warm October day—and nothing could be more gorgeously beautiful than the scene around. Those hanging

woods and magnificent trees were arrayed in all the varied tints of autumn, the sun was shining bright upon the blue waters of the lake, the distance with its broken horizon of mountains, melting into tender misty blue—nature around so serenely lovely—Man—man! divinest creation of the God of Nature—so miserable.

Mrs Birchell had time for these reflections as she advanced up that splendid terrace, her eyes fixed upon her friend, who, however, never lifted her's from her occupation.

She was almost close by before the sound of her footsteps upon the gravel walk aroused Emma. She lifted up her eyes—uttered a faint shriek—let fall her work, and rushed into Mrs Birchell's arms.

Once there, the long pent-up stream broke forth; and dropping her head upon the bosom of her friend she burst into a torrent of tears.

Mrs Birchell pressed the poor sufferer in silence to her heart. Words were unnecessary—there was something in that warm, firm pressure which assured Emma of sympathy and support.

“Oh! you are come at last—you are come at last—I am so glad you are come”—the poor

forlorn one kept murmuring, as soon as she had found voice.

“I have been so very, very, wretched—I am so very, very, wretched—I have so wanted you—so wanted you!”

“Compose yourself, dear Lady Emma,” Mrs Birchell whispered softly. “You are quite overcome—Sit down upon this turf seat, it is quite dry, let me sit down by you, and let us talk—tell me what it is all about—why do I find everything here so miserably uncomfortable.”

Emma did as she was bidden, and sat down upon the raised mossy bank of turf, and then Mrs Birchell threw one arm round her, and holding her hand in the other, said very tenderly—

“Are you better now, my dear Lady Emma?”

“Yes,” she said, wiping her eyes—“Crying has done me good—I could not help giving way—I could not, indeed—you took me by surprise.”

“Why should you try to help it?—a good cry now and then does more for one than anything.”

“Perhaps, that has been what I wanted—

my brain seems to have gone so dry, that I have sometimes thought I was hardly myself—this crying has refreshed me—A strange state, Grace,” she added with a faint smile—“When one can be thankful for such a flood of tears.”

“You have been very unhappy?”

“Oh! *so* unhappy!”

“I am sorry to see Mr Aubrey looking so ill.”

“You think he looks ill!”

“Why, my dearest Emma—is it possible that you do not see it?—I have observed, indeed, that those who live with each other are often strangely unaware of the progress of illness—But, surely, such a change as there is in Mr Aubrey, you could not have overlooked though you saw him every hour.”

“I never see him—except at a distance,” said Emma looking down—

“My dear child, what can you mean?—Dear Lady Emma, what can have happened?—I have been at home only three days, but some obscure hints of an unpleasant nature have reached me—We are friends, I came to know, if I could be of any use—to learn what was the matter.”

“ You are always so kind,—and a true friend to me,—and you are the best and tenderest of comforters—but this grief admits of no remedy.”

“ There are few, if any, that do not admit of some alleviation, at least—I wish I knew—but I must not intrude upon your confidence.” . . .

“ Ah—I don’t know—I never think I do quite know, what is wrong or right. For somehow my head is getting sadly confused” she said, putting her hand to her forehead—
“ One cannot have lived six years with a man like William Aubrey—Grace—without some way—some way—caring more—than one ought One ought to be firm, and unforgiving—surely one ought not to let one’s heart be moved and melted, towards a very great criminal.”

“ And why ought we not?” asked Mrs Birchell with simplicity—“ Why ought we not to forgive a sinner, like ourselves. Are we so perfect and immaculate?—Dear Emma! but I do not understand exactly what you mean.”

“ It is a frightful story, Grace:—Such a complication of wretchedness and wrong,—

and then, when I think this fatal beauty . . . that fatal love for me!—Oh that I could be so wicked as to take a pride in it—that this beauty—this love of his was the cause, perhaps, of all—Oh, I could rend this face of mine to pieces that has caused such awful wrong.”

“Dear Lady Emma! this is a strange mystery to me.—What can have rendered that innocent loveliness of yours—that gift of beauty so simply enjoyed, that one felt inclined to adore you for it—no pride or vanity, or fatal love of admiration degrading it—what can have made that loveliness a cause of misery or guilt, to yourself or any one?—I hope your too sensitive feelings deceive you,—but why this estrangement from your husband, of which all the world, I am sorry to say, is talking? There is some misunderstanding, depend upon it—but in the mean time, Mr Aubrey looks dreadfully ill.” . . .

“I am not the cause of that”—said Emma—relapsing into gloom again.—“Let Mr Aubrey tell his own story . . . blame me, if he will and can—but let him look to his own heart.—Oh, Grace—it was a fearful wrong.”

"What was a fearful wrong?"—asked Mary.

"Do you see" said Emma, "this wondrously beautiful place? Look round you, Grace—Is it not like paradise—like the garden of God, where there was no sin?—Ought it not to make one better, more high-minded, pious and good—more loving to God and man even to live in such a place—it is natural, I am sure, to think so,—but now it is all blighted and blackened to me. It is as if the fire from the pit had gone over it."

"My dear one, how excited you look."

"Well may I—Who would have thought that this loveliness of heaven's own creating around us—and that this simple beauty of a face like mine, should have been awful snares, the baits, to a horrible sin, a dreadful treachery and crime.—Yes, Grace, you know about his brother, his unjustly disinherited, unhappy brother—but you never guessed—I never dreamed till lately—how it all came about. "Oh Grace!—Grace!—William's treachery it was, that drove Edward to despair."

"His treachery—treachery in Mr Aubrey! In him! the just and righteous man,—impossible, Emma, you are mad."

"Oh! but I wish that I were. I would

be very—very—very glad to be mad! But somehow, I'm not mad—only so miserable—so bewildered!—So dry, here,” and she again put her hand to her head—“so tired of punishing—so weary of being inexorable—Oh, Grace—Grace—not to forgive is a very, very difficult task, indeed. But you shall know all”—she went on hurriedly—“It is best you should know all; but first take that child away—the little darling! It looks so like its father, poor William! It is wicked to feel so to him—Oh, very wicked! Just take her to nurse; she is in the summer-house, and then come back to me.”

Mrs Birchell removed the child, and returned.

She found the poor young mother still sitting upon the turf where she had left her, plucking the grass with her hands in an absent manner.

“I am here,” she said, sitting down by her again,—“Now, tell me all you wish me to know.”

“I don't know whether it is right or wrong to tell you; but if it is wrong, God forgive me for doing it—for indeed my

thoughts are all in confusion—and I am so unhappy, that I do not think I could bear it much longer, if I kept it to myself.”

And then, in faltering accents, her tale interrupted by sobs and sighs, and abundant tears, Emma related to her friend all that you have been made acquainted with, ending by these words,—

“And so, I made a vow to myself never to forgive him, because he had done this wrong to another and not to me—and I had been the cause of it.—And never to enjoy the least thing, and never to touch the least thing, of this accursed possession, if I could possibly help it. There is a story in the Bible that I have a confused recollection of, about the accursed thing of Achan. These beautiful, pleasant things that I have enjoyed so much, seem to me like that. I will never touch or handle them more—that is, as soon as I am able to provide necessaries for myself by the labour of my own hands; and I will never forgive him, or take pleasure in his society and affection again—which both have been a happiness to me, I own. He may enjoy these possessions by himself if he can, and he may

forgive himself if he can; but I will harden my heart against him. I have been false to Edward's memory, and have married the heartless brother who destroyed him; and I have tasted of and enjoyed the things of which he was dispossessed by a base act of home treason; but I never will do so again. This is easy enough; the most difficult thing is to harden my heart against William. Oh! sometimes—sometimes—just when I happen to meet him, and see that woe-begone face, it is hard! May God have mercy on him, but *I* must not."

And in this incoherent manner she kept running on, till Grace interrupted her.

"And who made you the judge—to slay, or to let alone?" she said, lifting up her thoughtful eyes, and looking into poor Emma's wild, half-distracted, and most miserable face, "And who imposed upon you this task—this cruel task of unrelenting severity to a poor, guilty man, who is dying by inches before your eyes? My dear one," and she pressed her hand almost with reverence, "I see and honour your feelings; and the more so for the great anguish you suffer in the discharge of what you imagine to be your

duty—but, indeed, I think, in this case you greatly mistake. It never can be right to cherish in our hearts this relentless hardness—better to pity and to love those whom Christ, our Master, loved and died for. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Let us leave the sinner to Him—The injured one is dead”

“Oh, no!” interrupted Emma, in a hoarse whisper, “I hope I have reason to feel certain that he is *not* dead.”

“Then restitution can be made—then your path is easy, dearest Emma. If it be true that William thus treacherously—alas! that this should be the word—betrayed his brother’s cause, and robbed him of his birthright, I cannot wonder at the abhorrence you feel in the idea of sharing in the profits of the wrong; but restitution may be made. Judge your husband by that. If the restitution *be* made, restore him to your heart; if refused, then, then my dear, it will be time enough to decide what you should do. But even then you must forgive. We must all forgive. It is the Divine command. Oh! the hallowed, blessed, merciful command! You need not—you must not—you ought not—to endeavour

to be implacable. Forgive him from your soul. If he repent, receive him as the sinner who repenteth should be received. If he remain impenetrable to good, forgive and pity him still. But he will not remain impenetrable—I am sure he will not.”

“Then you think I may forgive him, and speak to him again; and that it would not be a wrong to Edward living—or to his memory if dead?—I would rather bear anything than do another wrong to Edward. I thought all I could do now was to revenge him.”

“‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord;’ but,” continued Mrs Birchell, “I quite understand your feelings.—There seems to you something selfish in doing that which in your secret heart you are longing to do.—Something ungenerous to the betrayed in forgiving the betrayer—for this very reason that your heart yearns to do it.”

“Not yearns,” she answered; “no—*that* feeling is destroyed. This heart of mine can never yearn to him again; but it wounds my soul to see his misery, and I long to forgive him.—I do—I do—Oh, I know that I ought not—I cannot help it, but I do.”

“Oh ! the far-stretching consequences of evil,” thought Grace. “How hard it is to know what is right where all is complicated by sin.”

Yet she could not but think it right to endeavour at a reconciliation. To suffer this wretchedness to continue could not, she thought, be justifiable ; and then, she had such intense pity for the wretched man whose excessive misery was written upon his face in lines not to be mistaken.

I confess I am myself at a loss in questions like these.

They are, perhaps, the most difficult of all we have to solve in human life. The punishment of sin seems a necessary severity, and when our interest leans towards a more lenient course, there is something in the conscience which seems to revolt against thus benefiting ourselves by the exercise of forgiveness. But I think Mrs Birchell, upon the whole, was right, and I am sure she most fervently desired to be so.

The peace that she saw gradually returning to poor Emma’s heart at the idea that the relentless system she had adopted towards her husband was no longer required by honour or

duty, was a sore temptation to poor Grace to encourage her in it, so great a temptation that it almost made her mistrust herself.

One thing alone she felt could set all right, and that was, sincere repentance upon the part of Mr Aubrey, and restitution to his brother if he yet lived.

But would he make this restitution?—Ah! that was the question.

CHAPTER XVII.

No more—the guilt is banished,
And with the guilt, the shame is fled ;
And, with the guilt and shame, the woe hath vanished,
Shaking the dust and ashes from her head.

LEANING upon Grace's arm, Emma slowly walked towards the house, yielding to her friend's persuasions and to the secret longings of her own heart. She had resolved to seek her husband, to confess to him, without reserve, all she had learned and what she had felt; to sound the depths of his spirit, and if she found the true sorrow, the deep regret, for what was past, which her friend believed to be there, then to fling herself upon his breast, forgive from her heart, and suffer herself to love him once more; above all, console him with the idea that there might yet exist a possibility of reparation.

They entered the house, and, leaving Mrs

Birchell in her own room, she set forward alone in search of her husband.

She felt none of the shyness and unwillingness that might have distressed many a one entering upon such a task, for her character was so perfectly simple that she rarely dwelt upon herself, and her heart was beating with a joy, to which she had long been a stranger, at the thought of re-union, and was overflowing with gratitude to her God and to her Saviour, in that this blest command to forgive sinners, had been bestowed upon mankind. And great was the peace such thoughts and feelings brought with them—a new light seemed to dawn upon her mind, clearing away the heavy shadows, the thick darkness that had been lying so long upon it. She seemed to breathe afresh—as her bosom swelled with gratitude and love, and I know no feelings upon this earth so blest, as thus to love—and to love in God—to love the individual creature of God, in that wide element of universal good will with which the true love of God invests us.

And so she passed on, with light steps and beaming face, seeking for him in the library,

seeking for him in his dressing-room, seeking for him among the dark walks of the labyrinth, where Grace had left him.

But she found him not.

She spent nearly an hour searching for him among the shrubby walks—but in vain. Then she thought she would go back to the house, he might have returned there—he might be in his own room by this time.

She entered the house through a little glass door, which led, by a small back staircase, directly to Mr Aubrey's apartments, those, with which her own had, in happier times, communicated, before, as we have seen, she had exiled herself to the remotest end at the opposite wing of the house.

The dressing-room door which she had left open, she found shut; she knocked gently and then entered, looking round as she did so. But the dressing-room was unoccupied. The door, however, leading to what had once been her own bed-room, was ajar—and, as she paused upon the threshold of the one by which she was entering the dressing-room, she thought she heard a low moan proceeding from it.

She stepped softly across the dressing-room, noiselessly pushed the half-opened door upon the opposite side a little wider open, and looked in.

William was sitting upon a little couch placed close by the opposite side of the bed, that side which she had been accustomed to occupy ; his arms were resting upon what had been once her pillow ; his face bowed down and buried in it—He was uttering low moans.

Such piteous moans !—Never had it been her fate to hear such moans before.

They were not to be mistaken in their expression—they were the moanings of a breaking heart.

A few seconds she stood there motionless—listening to those low pathetic sounds—then the tears sprang to her eyes, her very heart melted within her ; and, crossing the floor, she knelt down with an air of great humility by his side, and said,—

“ William—forgive me ! ”

He did not start or rise from his knees—he slowly lifted up his head, fixed eyes of the deepest melancholy upon the honest, pleading face ; looked sadly at her for a

moment,—then covered his face with his hands, and with a groan turned away.

She clasped one hand round his arm, with the other endeavoured gently to pull away his hands from his face Murmuring all the while,

“ Oh ! William, forgive me !—You are so wretched !—But believe me, I am as miserable as you are—Oh ! William, forgive me.”

He suffered her to draw one hand from his face, laid it upon that beauteous head, now lifted up towards him with eyes so full of gentle meaning, and looking sadly but with inexpressible tenderness at her, faintly answered,—

“ Forgive you ! my love—You have not been to blame—What were you but the avenging angel—the angel of God’s vengeance ?—The reproaches of my own heart were not enough—No—no—”

“ William,” she said, still kneeling and looking up earnestly into his eyes—“ You know how I must have felt when I discovered the real truth—It has been a sore grief to me—I thought I was doing right in what I did—but my heart !—my heart would not. . . .”

“ Was it grief to you ? ” he said softly — “ You cared for me enough to grieve for, as well as to punish, my unworthiness. Say that again, Emma — Grief ! — Did it grieve you ? ”

“ Heaven knows how much ! ” The tears which had been brimming to her eyes now coursing rapidly over her cheeks — “ God knows, William, it has been a hard part for me to play towards you, who have been so very kind to me — but I thought — I thought — indeed, I don’t know well what I thought — I was hurried along by sorrow and passion, and knew not what to do.”

“ Dear, good child — ever — ever the same,” he said with much feeling. “ And now, my loveliest,” — but at that she shuddered a little and drew back — “ Nay, let me call you so once more — once more call you my own. . . . Alas ! . . . Alas ! let me, Emma — it will soon be all over.”

His countenance changed fearfully as he spoke. It turned white as death, and was convulsed as if by sudden and violent pain. He gently pushed her back, pressed his hand against his heart, and laid his head upon the pillow again.

She started from her knees, and bent over him, crying,—

“ William ! William ! You are very ill.”

“ Very ill”—he murmured in a low voice, as if scarcely able to speak.

“ What is it ?—What can be done ?” and she tried to lift up his head and support him—for he seemed sliding to the ground.

“ Death it is, Emma.”

“ Oh no !—oh, no !”—and stretching out her arm, she rang the bell furiously—“ Oh, no !—Who’s there ?—Who comes ?—Send Alice—Send Mrs Craven. . . .”

He made vain efforts as if to speak. He threw his head backwards and forwards, as if panting for air, and striving for utterance. Suddenly he fell against her arms so heavily that the weight was too great for them to bear—and he slipped through them upon the ground.

He looked like one already dead, except that his large dark eyes were open, and had life in them. He continued gasping convulsively for breath and voice.

With a loud scream, Emma rushed into the corridor, shrieking for Alice !—for Mrs Craven !—for help !

Before she could reach the top of the stairs, Mrs Craven, wild with agony, rushed against her, and passing her unheeding, flew rather than ran to the room, followed by Emma, whose heart beat so that she could hardly stand.

When she reached the room again William Aubrey still lay as she had left him, stretched upon the floor, but his eyes were closed—he had fainted or was dead.

Alice was kneeling over him, tearing her hair, and shrieking distractedly.

“Gone! Gone! Gone!—Dead! Dead! Dead!—William! William!—Come back—oh, come back!—Don’t die—don’t go without me! Oh, William! William! hear your poor mother call—hear your poor mother call! My child—my child—my own, own child!”

“For God’s sake, Alice!” cried Emma, trembling violently in every limb, but still mistress enough of herself to interfere—“For God’s sake, Alice, have done! He’s not dead. Rouse yourself—Run for help—for a doctor—for servants to lift him upon the bed! Are you mad?”

“*You* run—*you* go—fetch doctors—fetch servants—for I will never, never leave his

side—William! William!”—stooping down and kissing him passionately—“Let your mother kiss your cold, cold lips. Now you are dead she may claim you for her own. Nobody will want my child now. Woman!”—turning fiercely to Lady Emma—“You have killed him—You’ve done it with your barbarity—You’ve killed him! He was my only child, and you’ve killed him—Yes. Go run and fetch a doctor if you like, and see what he can do to piece a broken heart.”

Emma felt her own head beginning to turn, and a wild hysterical laugh and scream forcing itself to her lips, she ran out of the room, shrieking for help. Grace had by this time heard the cries, distant as she was, and she was already hurrying along the gallery when Emma, with a loud shriek, rushed into her arms, and began to laugh convulsively.

“Dear girl! Dear child! what has happened?”

“Oh! oh! oh! he’s dead! he’s dead! Call to them—call to them—Tell them to fetch a doctor! Oh, Grace! Grace! Grace! Grace!—he’s dead!”

The house was by this time aroused, and the servants came crowding into the galleries.

“Be composed—command yourself”—Grace kept repeating to the shaking creature in her arms. “Sit down, love, upon this bench—keep still for a moment—one of you fetch a little water—and run, run for the doctor—your master is dreadfully ill.”

“And go, go, go there,” Emma cried frantically pointing towards the door—“Go to his room—it’s my old room—my own old room—he’s on the floor—get him up on the bed—Oh, Grace!—Grace! let me go too . . .”

“So you shall, but be still one moment—compose yourself—one moment, then we will both go . . .”

She was persuaded to stay till she had swallowed a mouthful of cold water—and the universal trembling, which rendered it almost impossible for her to stand, had somewhat subsided; then leaning upon Grace’s arm, she made her way again to the place where he lay.

They found that William had been lifted to the bed, by the assistance of the numerous servants with whom the room and dressing-room were filled. He lay there, leaning

against the pillows that had once been Lady Emma's, but his head resting upon Alice's bosom, she supporting him with her arm.

He had recovered his consciousness, and his eyes were open. They were fixed upon the large window opposite to the foot of the bed; he seemed too ill to speak.

The face of Alice was a strange sight. Rage and grief contending—fierce anger, and passionate love. Her eyes were riveted upon William's face. She appeared to see or hear nothing that passed.

Emma came in leaning upon Mrs Birchell's arm, and looking deadly pale. As she approached the bedside Alice lifted up her eyes, regarded her sternly, and waved to her, as if to order her to keep off.

"He lives"—whispered Grace.

Emma went to the foot of the bed.

William raised his eyes, and looked at her and then the colour rushed to his cheek—violent pantings followed, and again he seemed on the point to expire.

"Can you not keep off?" cried Alice roughly. "You have done your worst—Would you kill him twenty times over? He is mine now—get away, all of you."

“No—no—no”—William panted forth.
—“Alice—Let her—let Emma come near.”

“Oh, very well,” said Alice. “So be it to the last, if you will have it so—but I *am* your mother—and no orders but yours shall part me from my child—Here, take my place, if you will, Lady Emma—you’re his wife, ain’t you?—Oh! to be sure, a mother must give place to a wife at all times—and such a wife too!”

Excess of astonishment seemed to produce a rousing effect upon the nerves of the expiring man.—His eyes opened wider, and fixed themselves upon Alice.

“What is that I hear?—Your words come to me like distant echoes—what is it you are saying?” . . .

“Who is that woman?” Grace asked one of the servants. “And what right has she to be here?”

“It is the housekeeper, Mrs Craven,” answered the maid-servant she spoke to.

“She was master’s wet nurse, he was very fond of her.”

“His wet nurse!” repeated Grace—but she said no more, but went up to Alice.

“ You are using strange and violent expressions”—she said gravely—“ and giving way to your feelings in a manner that you must know to be very wrong at such a critical time as this—if you cannot command yourself, you ought to leave the room.”

Alice seemed struck with these words. She evidently struggled hard to smother her sobs and cries. Wringing her hands convulsively together, she cast a look of anguish inexpressible upon the dying face, and drawing back leaned against the side of the bed, the picture of woe.

In the meantime Emma had taken the place by her husband, and trembling and shaking she knelt down and got her arm under his head, looking at him with an anxiety and pity not to be mistaken. With an ineffable expression his dying eyes languidly turned towards her.

She was greatly touched; her tears were streaming over him.

But Grace laid her hand upon her friend's shoulder, and stooped down and whispered, “ Emma, remember, there is justice to be done.”

She bent her head to her husband's face

and looking, Oh! with such serious tenderness into his eyes! in a low voice said,

“Aubrey, before you die, if this guilt lie on your soul—if really you did wrong your brother, do justice before it is too late. There is reason to believe that Edward is alive.”

“Do I hear right,” in a low hollow voice. “And is time given? Oh, had I but known this sooner!” he lifted his dying eyes upwards, as if to heaven, then turning them upon Emma—“Good, brave girl.”

But he evidently spoke with great difficulty, he panted for breath. By and by he was able to add—

“Have you pen and ink, and somebody to write? It is growing dark, you must lose no time.”

Mrs Birchell hurried into the adjoining room, and returned with the necessary materials. She ordered all the servants out of the room. Every one obeyed but Alice, she kept her place.

“Dear husband,” whispered Emma, “there is pen and ink Grace Birchell will write for us.”

“ My love ! What are you saying ? It seems very dark, I don’t quite hear or understand.”

“ Edward ! Edward ! Justice to Edward ! restore the estate to Edward.”

Alice leaned suddenly forwards, and made a snatch as if she would stop her, but recovering herself she sank upon her knees, buried her face in the bolster, against which the pillow upon which he rested was lying, and kept faintly groaning, and muttering to herself—
“ Wickedness and crime—and all end so,—crime, crime.”

“ Restore to Edward ?—Restore what?—You ?”

“ Oh, no !—no—no—The estate !—the estate !”

“ I hear you—yes—and would God Who’s there,” his voice was very faint.

“ Mrs Birchell—She will write. — Oh, dictate the words—husband, William—Speak—speak. —He is going—he is going—he will never—never speak again.”

He opened his eyes, which were fast closing ; the flashes of expiring life kindled up in them. —With a desperate effort he raised his head.

“ I give and bequeath—what must it be ? ”
in a confused way.

“ All—all—everything in the world—Oh, go on—for God’s sake, go on !

“ All I possess in the world, to my brother—No—no—you, Emma ! and my child—what am I saying ? ”

“ Oh never mind—never mind us !—he will take care of us—Do justice !—do justice ! go on—go on.”

“ Possess—to—to—Emma, one kiss, I am going fast.”

“ Oh, not yet !—not yet—not yet ! ”

But a dreadful crush of the features together—that fearful last agony of nature, and William Aubrey was gone !

She started upright, uttering a wild shriek, then fell again upon her knees, and covered his face with kisses and tears.

The paroxysm of grief was vehement and long. She was aroused from it by a deep, low groan proceeding from behind her.

Such a groan !

“ Who’s that ?—who’s that ? ” turning and looking at Grace.

“ Come away, dear Emma, let me take you away,” said Grace, gently.

There was another deep, heavy groan.

It proceeded from her who, kneeling upon the floor, had her head buried in the bolster.

Emma was aware of her for the first time, and her heart melted to that groan. At such moments all enmities are at an end—we feel inclined to love all who grieve with us.

Emma laid her arm over the shoulder of the kneeling woman—nay, she stooped down and pressed a solemn kiss upon her head—for Alice loved him that was gone as a son.

The kiss aroused her.

She lifted her face and looked up—the stern lustre of her once remarkable eye was all gone—it was glazed and dim, and dry as a stone.

“Did you kiss me?” she said.

“Yes, dear Alice, for you loved him.”

“Loved him! did I? And all to end in this!” she said wearily.

“All, indeed!”

“All my deceit and wickedness to bring him to this—!”

“Your wickedness, Alice!” Mrs Birchell interrupted by saying, for strange suspicions began to arise in her mind. She went on solemnly—“What does this and what do all

your late exclamations mean? What is this mystery, between you and him who is gone—let the truth come to light—if hidden truth there be—What have you done? *If* there be wickedness, confess it before God.”

The dim, stony, tearless eye turned to her.

“He is my own child!”

Emma started back from the bed.

Mrs Birchell said—

“Take care what you say. Remember you are in the presence of the dead. Your foster child, you surely mean *foster* child.”

“Not so—he was verily and indeed my son—and he never knew it.”

And with that she cast such a look of anguish upon the lifeless face!

It was the anguish of a mother.

“Oh, William! William! and all to bring you to this!”

“Rise from your knees, dear Emma, you are fainting.”

Emma did as her friend desired—she rose with some difficulty from her knees and sat down.

Mrs Birchell remained standing over the wretched woman.

“But what proof can you bring? How

are we to know? Surely you never could have been so dreadfully guilty. What could tempt you to commit so heavy a sin."

"A sin was it? Yes, surely I have seen since that it was—I did not much think about that at the time—one child was dead—it seemed not much to matter which, but Godfrey would never have forgiven me if it had been the wrong child. I saw things differently then—I thought to have made thee great and happy, my own William—and wrong *no* one but a poor baby, who was dead by no fault of mine.

"William! are you quite—quite gone, and never knew it—tarry a little—tarry a little! Thy mother is coming after thee!—wherever thou art gone, there will she be! Tarry a little, till I come."

And thus saying she moved forward a space, but still keeping on her knees, and stretched out her long, thin, wasted arms over the body, and laid her face upon his breast.

They respected her grief, for there was something awful in it.

Mrs Birchell sat down by her friend, and took her cold hand.

So they sat for they knew not how long.

There was dead silence in the room.

Alice neither moved nor spoke, she remained kneeling there, her face buried in the bosom of her son.

After a long time had thus passed, Grace looked at Emma.

“ I think I had better speak to her,” she whispered.

“ Do.”

She went to the bed-side, bent down to the kneeling woman, and said in a low, kind voice,

“ Alice! You must get up and move away. It is time. We must leave the dead.”

But Alice heeded not.

“ Alice. It is time. We must go away. We must leave the dead.”

But Alice moved not.

“ Alice! Do you hear? Indeed it must be—what is necessary to be done, it is time was done.”

But Alice heard not!

“ Alice! Alice!” endeavouring gently to raise her head.

But she let it drop again with a cry of horror.

Alice Craven was gone to her son!

They laid her by his side in the vault at Haughton.

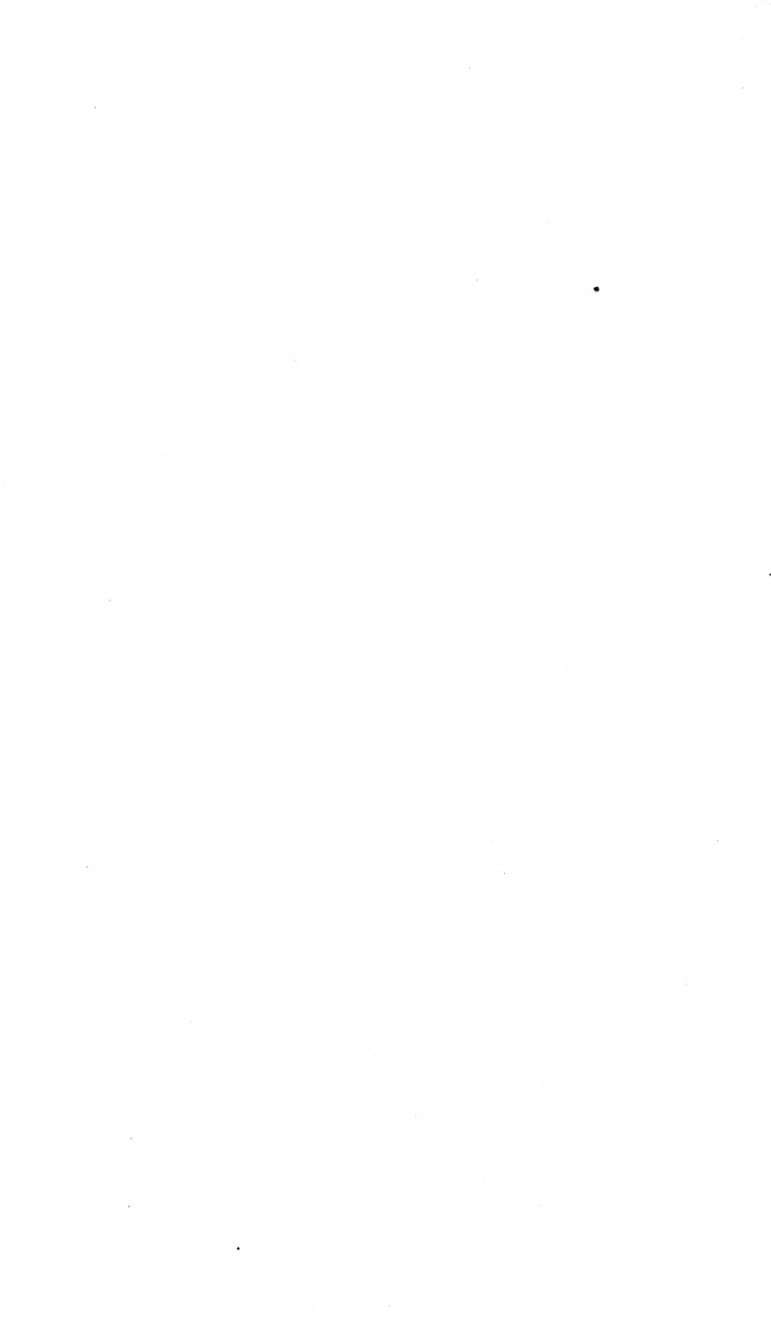
They buried him as William Aubrey should have been buried, though in a private and unostentatious manner.

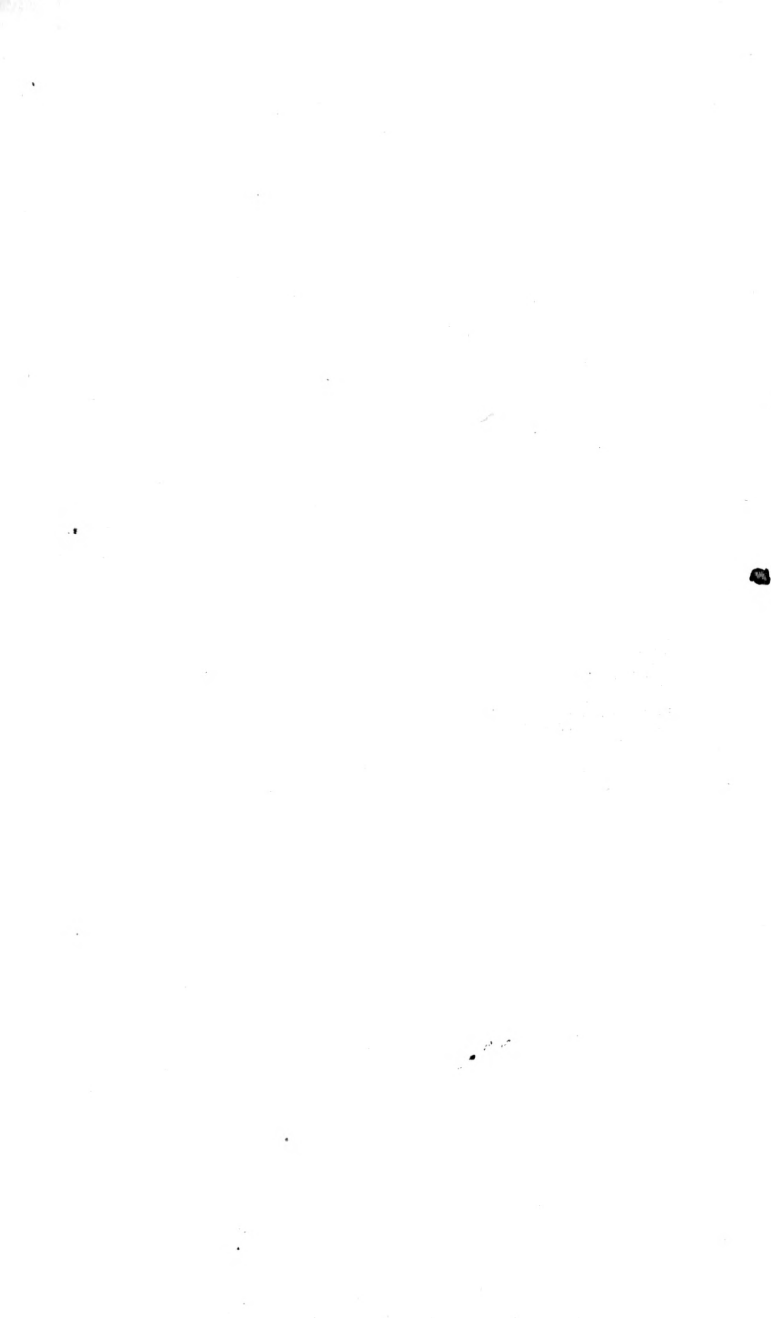
What next they did when these two were gone, I have not space here to tell.

Was ever situation so strange and perplexing? Were ever the claims of equity and law more entangled?

Perhaps some day we may follow the course of this story to its termination, that is, if there be any among you who care to hear it.

THE END.





UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 051353396